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Byzantium in the 15th century is too easily dismissed as the anachronistic tail end of an ancient ecumenical empire, whose only achievements, apart from the heroic last stand of Constantinople in 1453, were the contribution of literary Hellenism to Renaissance humanism, and the preservation of Orthodoxy from the encroachment of Catholicism.

This book argues that in struggling to survive as a small fortified enclave at the heart of Ottoman territory, Byzantium adopted the social structure and political ideology of a secular, territorial city-state on the Italian model.

It thus presents the empire of the last Palaiologoi in an entirely new light.

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Emperor or Manager:

Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453

Tonia Kiousopoulou



Emperor or Manager: Power and Political Ideology in Byzantium before 1453

Translated with a preface by
Paul Magdalino

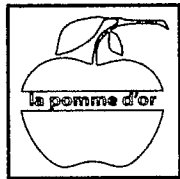
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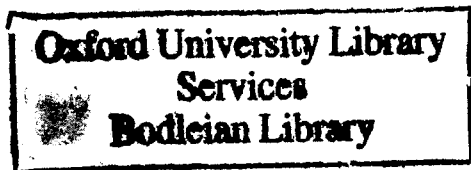
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The cover illustration shows a detail of the map of Constantinople in a manuscript of Cristoforo Buondelmonti's *Liber insularum Archipelagi*

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

For every author, completing a book means the end of a long personal journey, in the course of which he comes face to face with his knowledge and his ignorance, his certainties and his doubts, his enthusiasm and his disappointments. However banal this may sound, it is a reality, which has its own story, regardless of the final result.

I am not going to tell the story of this book, or to recall the road that I followed to bring it to its final form. I think that is of no interest to anyone but me. I shall just note that what sustained my effort in writing was the need to test the boundaries of historical knowledge in successive approaches to the subject, and to uncover those elements in Byzantine history that make it relevant today. I did not intend to celebrate what Cavafy called “our glorious Byzantine past”, but to understand it.

The book was published in Greek in 2007. Since then the international bibliography on the subject has grown, but none of it has changed my basic thesis. I have chosen to cite just a few titles that enrich the factual content; none of them is later than the end of 2009, when the translation was finished.

It would be a serious omission if I did not mention that my book owes a lot to the intellectual atmosphere which is cultivated in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Crete, where I have been teaching for more than twenty years. This atmosphere, which has made the Department a centre of excellence according to the latest peer review, is for all departmental colleagues a source of inspiration, collective endeavour and fertile controversy concerning the study of the past. I should not fail to express my warm thanks to all who have helped me with their suggestions, the discussions I have had with them, and their encouragement and support, both in the preparation and the completion of the work. I mention especially Olga Gratziou, Paris Gounaridis, Lousi Kiousoyoulou, Dimos Kontos, Dimitris Kyritsis, Rika Benveniste and Christos Hatzijosif. I thank those colleagues who read the book,

commented on it, and wrote about it in a very positive spirit. Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the Greek publisher, Nikos Gionis, who undertook to publish a book that could hardly be described as fashionable. And of course to Paul Magdalino, who did me the special honour of proposing an English language edition and took on the laborious task of translation. I thank him because he gives me the opportunity to communicate with readers who did not have access to the Greek edition.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This book was first published in Greek in 2007 under the title *Βασιλεύς ή οικονομός: πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση*. It was aimed primarily at a Greek reading public who knew about the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 as a traumatic event in their national history, and the source of much debate about their national identity. Its success in Greece prompted the suggestion that it might appeal to a wider international readership interested in learning more about the last decades of Byzantium in their late medieval context. As translator, and chief editor of Pomme d'or Publications, I am proud to present this English version of a book that gives a new perspective on a well-known but imperfectly understood period of Byzantine history.

Apart from some minor revisions of content, the main changes to the Greek edition are bibliographical. References to some important recent studies have been incorporated, and works that were previously cited in Greek translation are here cited in their original languages, or in English translation where appropriate. Quotations from the sources are all translated, and when they occur in the main text, the original Greek is given in the footnote with the source reference.

The other difference that readers familiar with the Greek edition will notice is that a different image has been chosen to decorate the cover. It is appropriate to introduce the book by explaining the choice. The image is a strip of a map illustrating a manuscript of Cristoforo Buondemonti's *Liber insularum Archipelagi* or *Isolario*.¹ This map, surviving in multiple manuscripts with multiple variations, provides a useful visual orientation to the analysis presented here by Tonia

¹ *Description des Îles de l'Archipel par Christophe Buondelmonti*, ed. E. LeGrand (Paris 1897). On the maps, see G. Gerola, 'Le vedute di Cstantinopoli di Cristoforo Buondelmonti', *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* 3 (1931), 249–79; I. Manners, 'Constructing the Image of a City: The Representation of Constantinople in Christopher Buondelmonti's *Liber Insularum Archipelagi*', *Annals of the American Association of Geography* 87 (1997), 72–102; Ç. Kafescioğlu, *Constantinopolis/Istanbul. Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital* (University Park PA 2009), 144ff.

Kiousopoulou. It is the bird's eye view that the time traveller cannot avoid seeing when coming into land in 15th-century Byzantium. The text it illustrates is the first description of Constantinople as seen through the antiquarian eyes of Renaissance humanism, and as such it belongs as much with the modern travel literature on the Ottoman Empire as with the accounts of medieval western visitors to Byzantium. Moreover, the *Isolario*, as its title indicates, is mainly a description of the Aegean islands, and significantly, therefore, links Constantinople not with its continental hinterlands in Europe and Asia, from which the 15th-century city was effectively cut off by the Ottoman occupation, but with the island and coastal world which was largely under the domination of Latin lords, among whom Venetians and Genoese predominated. This emphasises the basic reality of Byzantium in the 15th century: it was essentially a city-state that depended for its existence on a Mediterranean network of naval power, maritime commerce, and capital investment, all underwritten by the states and banks of Venice and Genoa.

The map of Constantinople in the *Isolario* also illustrates another basic theme of this book: the Byzantine state, reduced effectively to Constantinople, was a geographically defined territorial unit. All the versions of the map show a Constantinople thickly delineated by fortifications, and cut off by walls and water from its only visible suburb, the equally fortified Genoese colony of Pera. Indeed, Pera is depicted not only as a separate city in its own right, but as a more typically urban city than Constantinople, in that its walls enclose a dense, orderly cluster of bourgeois-looking buildings, contrasting with the sparsely and randomly built-up triangle of the old city to the south. Here the thin and uneven scattering of houses is dominated by a group of largely disconnected monumental structures: on the one hand, the imperial palace near the western wall,² some triumphal columns, and the Hippodrome; on the other hand, the great churches of Hagia Sophia and the Holy Apostles, and a number of other

² It has recently been argued that the last Byzantine imperial residence, as depicted on the Buondelmonti map, was identical with the structure known as then Tekfur Saray: N. Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-Istanbul* (Berlin – New York 2007), 134–42.

religious buildings mostly identifiable as monasteries by their box-like enclosures. The only two buildings that show any connection are the Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia, but this is entirely the mistake of the artists who had never visited Constantinople and clearly felt that the open end of the arena needed to be closed by the domed mass of the church.³

The image of Constantinople portrayed in the Buondelmonti maps is entirely consistent with the impression conveyed by western travellers to Byzantium in the 15th century:⁴ the impression of a confined, decayed, depopulated space where isolated monuments to vanished imperial grandeur loomed over a depressed, degenerate populace, while the emperor struggled to uphold his ancient dignity and the church struggled to maintain the integrity of Orthodoxy. The travellers' perception has contributed to the standard view of the place of the 15th century in Byzantine history: the Byzantine Empire in the last half century of its existence was a tragically doomed society, willingly trapped in the shell of its illustrious imperial past. All that sustained this society were the things that it preserved for posterity: the Hellenic *paideia* of the intellectuals who migrated to the West with their manuscripts, and the Orthodox Church, which kept the flame of true faith and Greek identity burning during the long night of Turkish occupation.

The idea that Byzantium in its final hour identified only with its past, and that the shell of ancient tradition stood for what was left of the living organism, has been quietly eroded by a generation of research. However, the present book by Tonia Kiousopoulou is the first systematic attempt to show why the Byzantium that perished in

³ It is clear that the Hippodrome has been 'transferred' to Hagia Sophia from the church of St John Diippion, which originally stood at the north end, and is shown as such in one version of the map: see J.-P. Grélois, 'Western Travellers' Perspectives on the Hippodrome/Atmeydanı: Realities and Legends (Fifteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)', in *Hippodrom/Atmeydanı. A Stage for Istanbul's History*, ed. B. Pitarakis (Istanbul 2010), I, 214–15.

⁴ See M. Angold, 'The decline of Byzantium seen through the eyes of western travellers', in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot 2002), 213–32.

1453 was something rather different, not only from the Later Roman Empire of Constantine and Justinian, and the powerful medieval empire of the Macedonian and Komnenian dynasties, but also from the revived empire of the early Palaiologoi, who maintained the state from the mid-13th to the mid-14th century as a modest territorial, regional power. After the painful adjustment to Ottoman expansion in the long and internally troubled reign of John V, the last Palaiologoi, Manuel II and his sons John VIII and Constantine XI, profited from the disruption of Ottoman power at the death of Bayezid (1402), to consolidate the survival of their state within a small, fortified niche at the heart of Ottoman territory. They achieved this precarious consolidation by intensive external diplomacy, and internally by forming an alliance with the urban aristocracy and ‘bourgeoisie’. Kiousopoulou’s contribution, in the pages that follow, is to analyse the nature, structure and ideology of this alliance.

Building on work of Nikos Oikonomides, and recent prosopographical studies of individuals at the court of the last Palaiologoi, Kiousopoulou shows that as the aristocracy became more ‘bourgeois’ through having to depend on trade rather than landed income, the ‘middle class’ of *nouveaux riches* became increasingly involved in political activity and decision-making, both as members of the imperial court and as representatives of the ‘people’. This combination of court and civic personnel formed a political class through which the emperor governed more as a manager than as an absolute monarch. The political class had close personal and business ties to the big commercial operators of Genoa and Venice, and used these ties to facilitate the emperor’s negotiations for western aid. At the same time, the political establishment, which favoured union with the Western church for political reasons, had little or no common ground with the clergy of the Patriarchate, which was committed to the preservation of Orthodoxy from the contagion of papal interference. Against the Church’s traditional ideology of a theocratic, ecumenical empire, the political class developed the ideology of a secular, territorial state. The Byzantine state in its final phase thus had less in common with its own past than with the city-based regional powers of the Italian peninsula, to which the Byzantine élite were bound not only by

commercial and financial ties, but also by participation in the new culture of Renaissance humanism, in which Greek intellectuals, like their Italian counterparts, began to conceive of their own societies in terms of the political constitutions of the classical *polis*.

Kiousopoulou has based her interpretation of 15th-century Byzantium on a mass of individual details and hints that she has carefully sifted from a wide range of mainly Greek sources, literary and documentary, narrative and rhetorical. It does not reflect the coherently articulated viewpoint of any one writer, or group of writers, which is why it has taken so long to formulate in modern scholarship. Most crucially, it does not obviously represent the Latin view of the dying empire, which brings us back to the bird’s eye view represented in the Buondelmonti map. If 15th-century Constantinople was developing into a city-state structurally and ideologically akin to Venice or Genoa, why did western visitors not notice the similarities, and describe Byzantium as a recognisable unit of their own Mediterranean world? Why did they emphasise the picture of imperial decay, popular degeneracy, and religious difference? Why does the Buondelmonti map depict imperial Constantinople so differently from bourgeois Pera? Many answers can be suggested. The travellers, as travellers and therefore in a sense Proto-Orientalists, were looking for the exotic and the antique, and beheld the Byzantines in a mirror where they sought the reflection of their own superiority. They ignored, or were not interested in, the similarities. Moreover, since most of them came as envoys and agents of French and Spanish kings, they tended to see other countries in terms of court society rather than civic institutions. They also tended to see what they were shown, and this points to what is perhaps the most important explanation for their ‘blind spot’ where the Byzantine ‘city state’ was concerned. The image of the ancient Christian, Roman Empire on its knees but preserving the dignity, the relics and the traditions of its imperial past was not the invention of westerners. It was the image fostered by the emperors themselves, because they knew that this was what the world expected of them, and ultimately what would win them sympathy and aid. Neither the rulers nor their humanist spokesmen had any interest in presenting their state as the equivalent of an Italian city republic.

The sparsely inhabited urban triangle of the Buondelmonti map, dominated by triumphal columns, walled monasteries, imperial palace, Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia, thus corresponded to what visitors expected to see, and what the Byzantine authorities wanted them to see, in 15th-century Constantinople. But in terms of what the Byzantine political class were trying to do, a 'normal' cityscape like that of Genoese Pera would have better reflected the social pragmatism of their adaptation for survival. So it is not perhaps entirely fortuitous that in some versions of the map, the artist has increased the density and the regularity of houses by the Golden Horn. This may illustrate the revival of the city after the Ottoman conquest, when most of the manuscripts were produced. However, it also undoubtedly represents the reality of the city that the Ottomans conquered, where the bulk of the city's population – still said to number some 70,000⁵ – and most of its businesses were concentrated beside the Golden Horn. To this extent, the maps give graphic, topographical expression to the basic fact that underlies the thesis of this book: the centre of urban gravity in late Palaiologan Constantinople was not the Blachernae Palace by the land walls, nor Hagia Sophia at the opposite end of the urban triangle, nor any of the isolated triumphal columns and monasteries, but a point on the commercial waterfront facing Pera, half-way between the poles of imperial and patriarchal power.

The Buondelmonti map is the earliest 'Renaissance' representation of Constantinople, and the only cartographic representation of the city that, in its various versions, shows the city's transition from Byzantine to Ottoman capital. The present book is the first scholarly study of late Byzantium that approaches the transition as a moment of Renaissance history. As such, it recommends itself to all readers who are attracted to exploration of the frontier zone where east meets west and medieval gives way to modern.

Paul Magdalino

ABBREVIATIONS

- BF: *Byzantinische Forschungen*
- Bsl: *Byzantinoslavica*
- BZ: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*
- Chalkokondyles: *Laonici Chalkokondylae Historiarum Demonstrationes*, 2 vols, ed. E. Darkó (Budapest 1927)
- Chortasmenos: *Johannes Chortasmenos (ca. 1370–ca. 1436/37). Briefe, Gedichte und kleine Schriften*, ed. H. Hunger (Vienna 1969)
- DOP: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
- Doukas: *Ducæ Historia Turcobyzantina (1341–1462)*, ed. B. Grecu (Bucarest 1958)
- EEBΣ: *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών*
- EHB: *The Economic History of Byzantium. From the Seventh through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies XXXIX* (Washington D.C. 2002)
- JÖB: *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*
- Jorga: N. Jorga, 'Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle', *Revue de l'Orient Latin* 4 (1896), 226–320; 5 (1897), 108–212; 7 (1900), 1–107; 8 (1900–1901), 1–115
- Kalekas: *Correspondance de Manuel Calécas*, ed. R.–J. Loenertz, *Studi e testi* 152 (Rome, Vatican City 1950)
- Kritoboulos: *Critobuli Imbriotæ Historiae*, ed. D. R. Reinsch (Berlin–New York 1983)

⁵ *Ἰωσήφ μοναχοῦ τοῦ Βρυεννίου τὰ εὐρεθέντα*, ed. E. Voulgaris, II (Leipzig 1768), 280.

- MM: Miklosich, F.– Müller, J. *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 6 vols (Vienna 1860–1890)
- PG: J.–P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Graeca, 161 vols (Paris 1857–1866)
- PLP: E. Trapp et al., *Prosopographisches Lexicon der Palaiologen Zeit*, I– (Vienna 1976–)
- PP: *Παλαιολογία και Πελοποννησιακά*, 4 vols, ed. Sp. Lambros (Athens 1912–1930)
- REB: *Revue des Études Byzantines*
- Scholarios: *Γεωργίου τοῦ Γενναδίου Ἄπαντα τὰ Εὐρισκόμενα. Oeuvres complètes de Gennade Scholarios*, 8 vols, ed. L. Petit–A. Siderides–M. Jugie (Paris 1928–1936)
- Sphrantzes: *Giorgio Sfranze Cronaca*, ed. R. Maisano (Rome 1990)
- Syropoulos: *Les mémoires de Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438–1439)*, ed. V. Laurent (Paris 1971)
- VV: *Vizantijskij Vremennik*
- ZRVI: *Zbornik Radova Vizantilološkog Instituta*

INTRODUCTION

*Constantinople the splendid, the homeland of all people, the New Rome, was captured in the month of May*¹

*What an unbelievable miracle, what an awesome, strange and great mystery*²

On 29 May 1453 the Turks became masters of Constantinople, a city which for centuries had inspired wonder and respect throughout the world. It was the climax of a long siege, during which the emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos strove to confront the overwhelming Turkish force with all the military and economic resources remaining to his state. His death on the ramparts of the walls signalled the end of the Byzantine capital.

The events of those days and the days that followed are well known. The historians of the Conquest and some foreign eyewitnesses described them in detail, each from his own point of view, leaving the sense that the fall of the City was inevitable. Later historiography has reproduced this impression and regarded the dissolution of the Byzantine state as the foregone conclusion of a process of decline that had set in with the Fourth Crusade. Thus the conviction became established that in the 15th century Byzantium was almost non-existent: territorially reduced, economically exhausted and militarily ineffective.

The idea of Byzantine decline and the certainty that the end of the empire was a foregone conclusion undoubtedly make the study of the 15th century redundant. To describe the conditions and the symptoms

¹ P. Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I, 632.

² *Ibid.*, 640.

of the terminal illness of a once powerful empire may be interesting in itself, insofar as it traces the final stages in the evolution of an exceptionally long-lived political formation. However, approaching the 15th century simply as a period of decline not only fails to provide the interpretative tools for understanding the changes that were at work in Byzantine society already from the middle of the previous century; it also perpetuates the image of a self-contained and thus ossified Byzantium, unchanging throughout the centuries and led to collapse by some inexorable law.

I believe that the study of this period acquires greater interest if it is placed in a wider framework, if, that is, 15th-century Byzantium acquires a place in the modern world, which was beginning to take shape in Europe at that time. Its main characteristics were, on the one hand, the new, pre-capitalist economic relationships, and, on the other hand, the birth of centralised states combined with formation of a kind of 'national' consciousness. Byzantium was definitely a part of that world, both geographically and culturally. It also belonged to the European world from a political point of view, and as such it existed both with its weaknesses and with its negotiating strength. The history of the period, viewed from the perspective of Constantinople, is characterised, among other things, by a continual movement of people, ideas and goods between East and West, while its political life is marked by agreements, promises and hostilities between the emperor's court, the Italian cities, the courts of the western rulers and the sultan.

If we examine the older literature on the 15th century, which for obvious reasons was limited where Byzantium was concerned, we can observe two basic tendencies. One was mainly interested in the political and military history of the period, and ended with a description of the weakening of the Byzantine state in its pre-ordained collapse. The other was concerned with the attempts at removing the schism of the churches, and was fed by the fear of the disruption to the Orthodox faith and identity that would be caused by the subordination of the Eastern church to that of the West. Both tendencies limited the scope of research until, around the end of the

1970s, historians realised that it was not possible or not sufficient to define a social reality, like that of 15th-century Byzantium, only by what it had ceased to be in relation to its past; it was essential to define it in terms of what it actually was or was in the process of becoming.

1453 undoubtedly marked the end of Byzantium as a state. However, the very fact of the Fall, for all that it has been almost exhaustively analysed as a military phenomenon, still raises basic questions. I shall avoid for the moment the issue of periodisation that arises with the consecration of the year 1453 as the final, almost non-negotiable, terminus of Byzantine history.³ I shall just note that even questions that seem, at first sight, quite simple have not been answered according to the standards of modern research. For example, why did Constantine Palaiologos, when he could only expect defeat, not surrender the City to the Turks, but choose instead to die a heroic death? Or why did the Palaiologoi persist in trying to end the schism, despite the opposition of a large number of their subjects?

The answers that have been formulated to these and similar questions conform to the letter and the spirit of Greek or rather Greek Orthodox history. The basic stimulus for my study was therefore basically my reaction to the prevailing and widely accepted views on the Fall of Constantinople. This was obviously not because I had a ready answer to the question why the City fell, but rather because those views did not explain, at least in my opinion, the real significance of the reasons that are usually alleged. Although not coherent among themselves, they are all coloured by the same moral outlook. They hold that the West did not send the requisite aid, that instead of co-operating in the face of the danger, the Unionists quarrelled with the anti-Unionists, or, moreover, that the rich inhabitants of the City did not contribute the necessary funds to save their homeland.

Thus in order to understand the circumstances, but also the significance, of the Fall of 1453, I set out to study the Byzantine 15th century, taking

³ For some further reflections on this matter, see the introduction to the volume *1453. Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση από τους μεσαιωνικούς στους νεώτερους χρόνους*, ed. Tonia Kiousopoulou (Heraklion 2005), ix–xv.

as my starting point the central thesis of Nicolas Oikonomides, who was the first to study this period through the lens of social history, and pointed to the contradictions that distinguished Byzantine society in its final phase.⁴ It is precisely those contradictions that make 15th-century society especially interesting to study. In other words, I find – and here I am guided by later studies of Oikonomides – that in the Palaiologan period, and particularly the closer we get to the 15th century, the Byzantine world, increasingly confined to Constantinople, experienced significant political and cultural developments. In order to trace these developments, we need to unburden ourselves of the paralytic weight created, in traditional historiography, by the undoubted decline of Byzantium as an empire, or by the pointless concern for it as an ark for the preservation of classical learning and as a factor in the exchange of spiritual influences between East and West. Finally, and in connection with what has just been said, the study of the late Byzantine period as a turning point from medieval to modern times is, moreover, a historiographical experiment, with additional significance for what is known as Greek national history. The slow transition from the Middle Ages to the modern period still remains, as far as the Balkans are concerned, a matter in need of research. It is remarkable that while international Byzantine studies have long been concerned with the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, similar concern for the passage from medieval Byzantium to the modern period is almost non-existent. The end of the Middle Ages remains a question of political, and indeed historical uncertainty only for the Balkan countries, Greece among them, and has not engaged the attention of European historians, for whom the problem of transition was settled with the Renaissance. Greek historians, especially, who already from the 19th century had to confront the so-called Tourkokratia, accepted without further discussion the chronological boundary set by the Fall and did not connect the question of historical periodisation with the problems surrounding the origins of Modern Greek language and literature, which have been traced back to the 12th century.

⁴ N. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople (XIII^e-XV^e siècle)* (Paris–Montreal 1979).

With the Fall, the Byzantine state disappeared; from this point of view, the fall of Constantinople is not only a military event, but an even greater political event which must be placed in its context in order to become intelligible. To put it differently: I believe that the Fall sealed the defeat of political choices and ideas that were cultivated in Constantinople during the last century of its Byzantine existence, and were expressed in the way the last Palaiologoi exercised power. Consequently, a significant parameter for understanding the event of the Fall lies in the character of the Byzantine state, as it was shaped by the combination of social conditions and external pressures in the last years of the 14th century and the first decades of the 15th.

There is no doubt that the 15th century, especially, is a period characterised by the lack of clear lines of distinction between people, opinions, collective identities or political strategies. Reading the texts of this period, the scholar continually has the sensation that the facts are slipping out of his grasp and forming images that overturn each other. In the end, the only clear distinction is that between those who supported the union of the Churches and those who opposed, again without either group being strictly circumscribed and individuals being unswervingly committed to one or the other. However, the dividing line between the erstwhile groups of unionists and anti-unionists is clear and the interest lies in the very fact that across the line interest groups are coalescing and dissolving, political collaboration is happening and alliances are being forged. I think, and I hope it will become apparent in what follows, that the clarity of the dividing line between unionists and anti-unionists is not coincidental: the union of the Churches became the most serious political question precisely because it revealed the tendency of the secular authority to break free of the grip of the Patriarchate, something which undermined the constitution of Byzantium as a medieval state, and was certainly interwoven with the ambitions of the ruling stratum of Byzantine society.

When we refer to the Byzantine state in the 15th century, we mean in effect Constantinople and its region; the progressive occupation of the Balkan peninsula by the Turks, culminating in the capture

of Thessaloniki in 1430, confined the emperor's jurisdiction to the capital and the neighbouring islands, Lemnos, Samothrace and Imbros.⁵ Besides, the dynastic quarrels of the Palaiologoi, first the clash between Manuel II and his nephew John VII, and later, the conflicts among Manuel's sons, had the result that the last remaining Byzantine territories on the shores of the Sea of Marmara, in the Peloponnese and in the region of Mesembria, were ruled almost independently. John VIII, as the rightful emperor and successor, sought to control these territories, and he was essentially able to distribute the titles to them, thus removing, when necessary, his brothers from Constantinople, especially Demetrios and Theodore, who were hostile towards him. Manuel and John both showed constant interest in the Peloponnese, and this is why they took care to ensure that the Despot appointed to Mystra was a family member with whom they could co-operate. It is revealing that, despite his quarrels with his brothers, and after negotiations with them, the title of Despot went eventually to Constantine Palaiologos (the later emperor Constantine XI), who from early on helped John VIII in exercising power, especially when he was absent from the City.

Constantinople was throughout the whole late Byzantine period a city with an important position in the economically integrated world of the eastern Mediterranean. Its inhabitants had commercial relations with the Italian cities and were active in both short-distance and medium-distance trade. At the same time, they were under the ever-intensifying threat of Turkish expansion. It is interesting to examine how, in these circumstances, or rather under the pressure of these circumstances, the city-state of Constantinople was structured, characterised, as it also was, by a long imperial tradition.

We will thus be concerned in what follows with the functioning of the Byzantine state as a city-state. It goes without saying that the study of the state's organisation is not an end in itself. Listing functionaries and the offices they held is meaningful only if it can reveal the social connections and the ideological tendencies of the

⁵ A. Bakalopoulos, 'Les limites de l'Empire byzantin depuis la fin du XIV^e siècle jusqu'à la chute (1453)', *BZ* 55 (1962), 56–65.

period. It is all too easy for the historian to conclude that a state in debt to and economically dependent on the West, a ruler who was tributary to the sultan, and a city under siege or under constant threat of occupation, did not have much room for manoeuvre. Yet the famously 'desperate' attempts by the last Palaiologoi to save the City show, I believe, that the emperors and the social élite of 15th-century Byzantium were trying in political terms, that is in terms of confrontation, to widen their margins of opportunity. This is exactly the basis for the present study, which aims to enquire whether, to what extent, and in what sense Byzantine society, despite the vagueness of its dividing lines and the fluidity of its opinions, broke with its imperial past and 'radicalised' in its effort to survive the conflicts that engulfed it. That any 'radicalisation' was cut short by the capture of the City in 1453 is well known.

This study, which ends in 1453, is in three parts. The first is entitled 'Space and people' and takes as its subject the image of Constantinople as it appears in the sources of the period, that is in the eyes of contemporaries. The city is not just a stage for the events that will be analysed subsequently. Given that every city is shaped and functions through the people who inhabit it and the relationships they develop among themselves, the organisation of space in Constantinople leads to a consideration of the groups that made up Byzantine society and intervened in its political life in one way or another. The political life of Byzantium is marked, in the 15th century, predominantly by the separation between the secular officials (*archontes*) and the officials of the Patriarchate. I try to understand it, in the second part of the book, through the analysis of specific themes which correspond to separate units: first, the collective profile of the political establishment, the officials, and secondly, the administrative organisation of the state on the basis of known official titles and the public management of economic affairs. In the last part are examined, on the one hand the principles of the existing political system, and on the other hand the ideological constituents of political life, through study of the collectivities that were formed in the period in question. In particular, the meaning of the notions of homeland (*patris*) and race (*genos*), which occur with great frequency in the surviving texts, is analysed

through the prism of the collective identities that were necessary to the different groups of Byzantine society and were projected by the intellectuals representing those groups. Understanding them will allow us to give greater coherence to the profile of those who held political power and to the way in which the *archontes* exercised it.

Earlier I referred to my intention to study the Byzantine 15th century and especially its political life as a historiographical experiment within the framework of Greek national history. I would venture to say that this experiment has a political origin. Often as professional historians, absorbed in the routine of our research, we forget that our motives are, explicitly or implicitly, basically political. We may not always admit it, but history is fully tied to the present; consequently, it is the problems of our own time that we want to address when we choose to study this or that historical topic. Although this is generally valid, it seems not to apply to Byzantine history. For all the revival of interest in Byzantium that has been manifest in recent years with the writing of historical novels or exhibitions of Byzantine icons, the questions that usually interest Byzantinists do not obviously arise from the need to make the present more comprehensible. To be more exact, the questions asked are often anachronistic and perhaps in some cases a-historical. This is not the place to go into the general development of Byzantine studies over the century in which they have existed as an independent field of history. However, I should give a clear explanation as to why, at least in my view, the study of the 15th century has a political basis.

Recently in Greece there has been a debate, occasioned by the book of N. Svoronos, relating to the origins of the Greek nation.⁶ Among other things that emerged from the debate, two, in my opinion, were particularly important. First, when and how the Greek nation was formed remains, even today, an open question that historians have difficulty in confronting. Secondly, in the discussion, it is only thanks to Svoronos that Byzantium is referred to at all, and indirectly at that. The present study was in its final stages when the

⁶ N. Svoronos, *Το ελληνικό έθνος. Γένεση και διαμόρφωση του Νέου Ελληνισμού* (Athens 2004).

whole debate began. The two observations that I have just made dispelled my last doubts as to the usefulness of my undertaking. The transitional but 'long' 15th century, a period in which Byzantium was neither an empire nor a nation state, allows us to study the process of transformation from ecumenical to 'national' statehood. Of course I have no intention of drawing unhistorical parallels. Nor do I intend to pursue a quest for the continuity of Hellenism, or to display the loyalty that is expected of a Byzantinist towards poor, neglected Byzantium. However, contemporary theoretical re-evaluations with regard to the Greek nation and the corresponding political attitudes help us to ask the right questions in order to understand that Byzantium which is so distant and at the same time so continually present in our modern Greek life.

PART 1

THE SPACE AND THE PEOPLE

1. Constantinople: the Organisation of the Space and its Functions

In 1411 the intellectual Manuel Chrysoloras addressed from Rome, where he was in attendance on the Pope, an oration in the form of a letter to the emperor John VIII Palaiologos.¹ In this rhetorical text entitled 'Comparison of Old and New Rome', Chrysoloras stressed the need for rapprochement between East and West and used the comparison of Constantinople with Rome to prove that the two cities, and correspondingly the worlds that each symbolised, had a common ancestry. In order to draw the comparison Chrysoloras made an imaginary journey to Constantinople, his birthplace, and nostalgically recalled to mind its beauty, its size, and its majesty. For the purpose of his composition he also remembered and emphasised features of the city which constituted symbols of its imperial power and its history.² Apart from Hagia Sophia, which he described as a world monument, he referred to the church of the Holy Apostles, the statues and columns, the Golden Gate and the imperial tombs. At the same time, he drew a picture of a flourishing and prosperous city.³ A similar picture is presented by Isidore, the later metropolitan of Kiev, in his encomium for Manuel and John Palaiologos, in which he dwelt especially on the description of the city's well-kept streets.

“... its avenues, all thoroughfares for horse traffic ... there are also covered streets, most of them wide enough for

¹ Manuel Chrysoloras, *Σύγκρισις Παλαιᾶς καὶ Νέας Ρώμης*, PG 156, cols. 23–54; new edition by Cristina Billò, 'Manuele Crisolora, *Confronto tra l'Antica e la Nuova Roma*', *Medioevo Greco* 0 (2000), 1–26.

² See the comments of G. Dagron, 'Manuel Chrysoloras: Constantinople or Rome', *BF* 12 (1987), 281–8; see A. Kioussopoulou, 'La notion de ville chez Manuel Chrysoloras: *Σύγκρισις Παλαιᾶς καὶ Νέας Ρώμης*', *Bsl* 59 (1998), 71–9.

³ Chrysoloras, *Σύγκρισις*, cols. 41–5.

carts. Some terminate in sanctuaries, colonnades and palaces, others in theatres and circuses and gymnasia and baths and the city's extremities, while others again lead to markets and shipyards and harbours."⁴

In contrast to Chrysoloras and Isidore, travellers to Constantinople give a different, if frequently inconsistent picture.⁵ In their texts they describe a deserted city with ruined palaces and neglected churches, dilapidated houses and empty spaces, while pointing out that only the market area along the Golden Horn was densely inhabited.⁶ However, they could still admire the number and the sumptuousness of the churches.⁷ The size of the city and its treasures even impressed those who got to know it as conquerors.⁸

Certainly, Constantinople in the 15th century had neither the size nor the magnificence that visitors had come to expect of the city, based on the myth that surrounded it.⁹ It was a much smaller city than

⁴ PP III, 148: Ἀποτέμνεται δ' αὐτῆς ἀγνυαί, λεωφόροι καὶ ἱππῆλατοι πᾶσαι ... ἔστι δ' ἐν οἷς καὶ δρόμους καταστέγους, τὰς δὲ πολλὰς ἀμαξηλάτους· ὧν αἱ μὲν προσαπολήγουσιν [εἰς] ἱερὰ καὶ στοὰς καὶ ἀνάκτορα, ἄλλαι θέατρα καὶ ἵπποδρόμους καὶ γυμνάσια καὶ βαλανεῖα καὶ τὰς ἐσχατίας τῆς πόλεως· αἱ δὲ πρὸς ἀγορὰς καὶ νεώρια καὶ λιμένας. The great streets always impressed visitors: see J. P. A. Van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople. Ancient Monuments and Old Traditions in Medieval Travellers' Tales*, I (Leiden 1980), 254. For the street plan of Constantinople, see A. Berger, 'Streets and Open Spaces', *DOP* 54 (2000), 161–72.

⁵ See M. Angold, 'The decline of Byzantium seen through the eyes of western travellers', *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. R. Macrides (Aldershot 2002), 213–32.

⁶ Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Embajada a Tamorlan*, ed. F. López Estrada (Madrid 1943), 57–8; tr. G. Le Strange, *Embassy to Tamerlane 1403–1406* (London 1928), 88–9. Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, tr. M. Letts, (London 1926), 146; G. Gerola, 'Le vedute di Costantinopoli di Cristoforo Buondelmonti', *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* 3 (1931) [hereafter Buondelmonti], 277.

⁷ Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, 34–5, tr. Le Strange, 61–2, refers admiringly to the Peribleptos, St John of Petra, the Panagia *ton Hodegon*, and the Panagia of the Blachernae; see also Buondelmonti, 276–7.

⁸ M. Balard, 'Constantinople vue par les témoins du siège de 1453', *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango – G. Dagron (Aldershot 1995), 177.

⁹ For the image that westerners continued to hold of Constantinople, despite the changes that happened after the capture of 1204, see A. Ducellier, 'Une

that of earlier centuries. It had a population of no more than 70,000 inhabitants, without counting occasional visitors on commercial, religious, or military business, or temporary residents. Moreover, it was a city that had endured the long siege by Bayezid at the end of the fourteenth century, and lived under the threat of a new Turkish siege. Consequently its inhabitants had at intervals to cope with conditions of extreme want and deprivation.¹⁰ During the siege of Bayezid, many Constantinopolitan families, unable to bear the difficult state of affairs to which they were reduced, left the city en masse,¹¹ while those who remained were often obliged to sell their houses or gardens to rich fellow citizens in order to survive.¹² Indeed, it is recorded that houses were demolished for their roof beams to be used as fuel.¹³ All the same, and in spite of its contraction, Constantinople was still classed among the great cities of the time.¹⁴ Finally, it is a fact that from the moment of its foundation, Constantinople was not densely inhabited over

mythologie urbaine: Constantinople vue d'Occident au Moyen Âge', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 96/1 (1984), 405–24.

¹⁰ We get a very clear description of the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of the besieged city in many letters of Manuel Kalekas. See for example Kalekas, 235–6. The patriarch Matthew also comments on the mass exodus in his appeal to his fellow citizens to change their ways, after the brutal exploitation of the weak, the injustices, deceits and thefts that they had committed. For the difficulties that the inhabitants faced, see P. Gautier, 'Un récit inédit sur le siège de Constantinople par les Turcs 1394–1402', *REB* 23 (1965), 102–17. More generally, see Nevra Necipoğlu, 'Economic Conditions in Constantinople during the Siege of Bayezid I (1394–1402)', *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, 157–67 and recently eadem, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins. Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge 2009), 149–84.

¹¹ D. Chatzopoulos, *Le premier siège de Constantinople par les Ottomans (1394–1402)* (Montreal 1995), 122–3.

¹² MM II, 377–9: the *oikeios* of the emperor Nicholas Sophianos, *ktetor* of the monastery of St Mamas, bought a field from Manuel Palaiologos for 800 *hyperpyra* and a perfume shop at the Kynegos gate.

¹³ Doukas XIII.7.

¹⁴ E.g. Stephen of Novgorod (Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 44) says enthusiastically that entering Constantinople was like going in to a great forest where one needed a guide. For comparison, we may mention that of the great cities around the middle of the 14th c., Venice had 120,000 inhabitants and Genoa 100,000; in this connection, see *Les villes d'Italie mi XII^e–mi XIV^e siècles*, ed. F. Collard – I. Heullant-Donat, et al. (Paris 2005), 383 ff., esp. p. 410 for Genoa and p. 460 for Venice.

the entire space that it occupied. The mid-14th-century description by Ibn Battuta, who saw the city as an ensemble of thirteen densely inhabited villages, is well known and indicative.¹⁵ Even during its periods of prosperity, there were expanses of gardens and vineyards between the houses, which were intensively cultivated during the period we are studying; Kritoboulos has the sultan Mehmet II tell his troops, “it is no longer a city in anything but name; otherwise, it is an enclosure of arable land, vegetable gardens and vineyards, with redundant business and empty walls”.¹⁶ Because of the food shortage, as well as the mass exodus of its inhabitants, the land inside the city readily changed owners and uses.¹⁷

Constantinople was still surrounded by its walls, which excited the admiration of its visitors, its defenders and even of its enemies, and which were repaired several times during the 15th century.¹⁸ However, the real boundaries of the city enclosed a clearly more restricted area and corresponded to the imaginary line that connected the Blachernae

¹⁵ Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354*, tr. H.A.R. Gibb, II (Cambridge 1962) 497–514; see also the comments of I. Djurić, ‘L’habitat constantinopolitain sous les Paléologues: les palais et les baraques (quelques remarques)’, *Πρακτικά Α’ Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο. Τομές και Συνέχειες στην ελληνιστική και τη ρωμαϊκή παράδοση* (Athens 1989), 733–52.

¹⁶ Kritoboulos I.10§13: μηδὲ πόλεως οὔσης ἔτι, ὄνομα δὲ μόνον σωζούσης· τὰ δ’ ἄλλα γῆς ἀροσίμου καὶ φυτῶν καὶ ἀμπέλων περιβολός ἐστιν, ὡς ὁρᾶτε, καὶ ματαίων οἰκονομιῶν καὶ τοίχων κενῶν. It is true that later on, the sultan also promises his troops the booty of a city with rich inhabitants and costly churches.

¹⁷ See, e.g., MM II, 497: Mavrommates had abandoned a *topos* in the Kynegos quarter, which was finally appropriated by his neighbour Markos Palaiologos Iagaris who planted it with wheat. Clavijo (ed. López Estrada, 40, 57; tr. Le Strange, 68, 88) also refers to gardens and fields with cereal crops.

¹⁸ See R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine. Développement urbain et répertoire topographique* (Paris 1964), 273–5, 280, for dated inscriptions on the walls with the name of John Palaiologos; see also, on p. 299, a comparable inscription with the name of the Despot of Serbia George Branković. For the repair of the towers, see also PP III, 296–7. The repair of the walls is further discussed by K.–P. Matschke, ‘Builders and Buildings in Late Byzantine Constantinople’, *Byzantine Constantinople. Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. Nevra Necipoğlu (Leiden 2001), 327–8.

Palace, the church of the Holy Apostles,¹⁹ the Forum Tauri, the Forum of Constantine, the Augousteion and Hagia Sophia. In the area that was bounded by this line, and by the shores of the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn, the political, social, religious and economic life of the city unfolded. Outside this boundary, a much-visited site, with political importance, was the Peribleptos, where Manuel II lived when he was ill and where various meetings of the officials are attested.²⁰ The religious buildings of the city were numerous. Some of the travellers visited them as tourist attractions, while for others, like the Russian travellers, the churches and monasteries had significance as places of pilgrimage. All, however, observed that most of them were neglected, and especially those that lay outside the boundary we mentioned earlier.²¹

The urban fabric of the capital in general had remained unchanged. From this point of view, Chrysoloras’ imaginary tour goes to existing places and refers to existing landmarks and monuments. Yet some were not in good condition. The Hippodrome, for example, was covered with trees,²² while Buondelmonti observes that vineyards with a significant annual wine production were cultivated in the monumental cistern of Philoxenos and three others (those of St John, the Pantokrator and the Holy Apostles).²³ The Great Palace, moreover, where the most important secular buildings of the city

¹⁹ The church of the Holy Apostles is described as abandoned at this time (see Buondelmonti, 276). In the decade after the Fall, when the Patriarchate was established there, it constituted the outermost point of the city; the surrounding area was so deserted that the patriarch abandoned it completely and moved to the Pammakaristos. However, meetings were frequently held at the Holy Apostles in preparation for the council of Ferrara–Florence (see notably Syropoulos, 102ff).

²⁰ Doukas, XXVIII.3. Cf. also PP II, 136: ἀνεγνώσθη ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῆς Περιβλέπτου τὸ πρῶτον, παρόντος τοῦ βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου καὶ πολλῶν τῆς συγκλήτου. Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, 37–40, tr. Le Strange, 64, likens the monastery to a great city within the city.

²¹ Clavijo, tr. Le Strange, 88, mentions 3,000 churches.

²² Çiğdem Kafescioğlu, ‘Reckoning with an Imperial Legacy: The Ottomans and Byzantine Constantinople’, 1453: *Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση στη νεώτερη εποχή*, ed. Tonia Kiousopoulou (Heraklion 2005), 37.

²³ Buondelmonti, 276; Clavijo, tr. Le Strange, 87, also describes the cistern of Philoxenos, though without reference to vineyards.

had formerly been concentrated, was ruined and deserted, even though it still impressed visitors by its great expanse; it appears that the emperors used only certain parts of it, and only on the eve of their coronation in Hagia Sophia.²⁴

The Central Avenue (Mese) was still the central artery of the city, connecting the Fora, where stood the statues and columns that the various visitors admired. To the west, it ended at the Golden Gate, which however had fallen into disuse as the main point of imperial entry; already from the time of the Komnenoi, the emperors preferred to go about by sea and used the so-called Imperial Gates (Basilikai pylai) on the Golden Horn, the one near the Blachernae palace and the other near the Acropolis point, the present-day Sarayburnu.²⁵ Besides, the towers that John V had constructed at the Golden Gate had been demolished at the demand of the Turks and visitors saw nothing but their ruins.²⁶

The Mese kept its porticoes and its commercial functions only in its eastern part,²⁷ beyond the point where it intersected with the Long Portico (Makros Embolos), which went to the Imperial market on the Golden Horn. This market was held near the Imperial Gate (Basilike Pyle)²⁸ and there, according to Clavijo, began the city's

²⁴ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 242–7, with reference to further evidence from non-Russian travellers. See also K.–P. Matschke, 'Die Stadt Konstantinopel und die Dynastie der Palaiologen', *Das spätbyzantinische Konstantinopel. Alte und neue Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte zwischen 1261 und 1453* (Hamburg 2008), 31 ff.

²⁵ A. Berger, 'Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions in Constantinople', *Byzantine Constantinople*, ed. Necipoğlu, 83–5.

²⁶ Sarah Guberti Bassett, 'John V Palaiologos and the Golden Gate in Constantinople', *TO EAAHNKON. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.*, I (New Rochelle NY 1993), 117–33. See Doukas, XIII.3–5

²⁷ Kafesçioğlu, 'Reckoning with an Imperial Legacy', 39.

²⁸ Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 140. Marlia Mundell Mango, 'The Commercial Map of Constantinople', *DOP* 54 (2000), 205–7, thinks that this market was near the Strategion, and maintains, like Majeska (pp. 353–4), that it derived its name, which it later gave to the nearby gate, from a Basilica that housed a market. For the suggestion that this market lay further to the west, at the present-day Unkapanı, see A. Berger, 'Zur Topographie der Ufergegend am Goldenen Horn in der byzantinischen Zeit', *Istanbul Mitteilungen* 45 (1995), 152–5; P. Magdalino,

commercial quarter with shops and warehouses for goods imported by sea.²⁹ A 15th-century text³⁰ contains a fine description of the food market of Constantinople, which stretched along the Golden Horn, while bakeries (*mankipeia*), grocer's shops (*saldamareia*) and taverns (*kapelika ergasteria*) were scattered throughout the city. Tafur records that wine, bread and fish were even sold around Hagia Sophia, no doubt in the still-remaining stoas where the Spanish traveller saw a stone table, at which both the *seniores* and common people ate.³¹ Continuing commercial activity around the Forums of Constantine and Theodosius has been inferred from the fact that Mehmet II established his bedestens in this area,³² but perhaps more telling is a reference, in a document of 1351, to vineyards near the 'Old Forum', presumably the Forum of Constantine.³³ The evidence for commercial locations in Palaiologan Constantinople points overwhelmingly to the gates and sea-shores of the city. The trade in grain imported by sea was concentrated around the Gate of St John Prodromos, between

'The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople', *DOP* 54 (2000), 221 [= *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople*, (London 2007), no. III]. The Imperial Gate in question was clearly not the one at Sarayburnu.

²⁹ Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, 57; tr. Le Strange, 88.

³⁰ In it we read that, going out by the Little Gate (Mikra Pyle), one encountered the fishmongers, next to the greengrocers, the cheesemongers, the caviar merchants and the *charcutiers*; arriving at the Imperial Gate, one met a road (perhaps the Long Embolos) going inland, along which the butchers had their stalls: see P. Canivet – N. Oikonomides, '[Jean Argyropoulos,] La comédie de Katablattas: invective byzantine du XVe siècle', *Δίπτυχα* 3 (1982–3), 55–7. Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 97 n.177, locates the Little Gate south of the Petron Gate and north of the Imperial Gate, and makes a plausible case for identifying it with the Dexiokrates Gate or the Gate of St Theodosia. The Little Gate formed the boundary between the cornmarket and the other shops. At an earlier date (1342), 'money-changers' booths and nailsmiths' shops (καταλλακτικά τραπεζοτόπια και καρφαρεία) are attested at this gate, plausibly identified by K.–P. Matschke, 'The Late Byzantine Urban Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries', *EHB*, 472, with the Anastasis Gate.

³¹ Tafur, 142.

³² Mundell Mango, 'The Commercial Map of Constantinople', 205.

³³ *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, III, ed. J. Koder – M. Hinterberger – O. Kresten (Vienna 2001), no. 184.

the Petrion Gate and the Little Gate.³⁴ At the city gates were also to be found the so-called ‘exchange tables (καταλλακτικά τραπέζια)’ or ‘bank places (τραπεζοτόπια)’, where loans were contracted and money was changed.³⁵ In the square between the sea walls and the Golden Horn, taverns, like that of Goudeles, plied their trade.³⁶ They are mentioned again in the neighbourhood of Vlanga,³⁷ and in the Kynegos quarter,³⁸ where ‘perfume workshops (μυρεψικά ἐργαστήρια)’ were also located.³⁹ By the land walls, commercial activity developed around the Adrianople Gate, on account of commercial exchanges with the Ottoman capital.⁴⁰

Public life revolved mainly around the shore of the Golden Horn, both because the harbour and the market were here, and because the political centre was located at the Blachernae. Although we do not have much information, we may suppose that the houses of the rich were also built in this general area. We know that the Synadenoi had a house at Psatharia,⁴¹ and that the emperor’s ‘familiar (οἰκεῖος)’ John Sophianos received in dowry from Pepagomene half of her house located ‘at the great aqueduct.’⁴² On the basis of Doukas’ account we may also suppose that the palace of the *protostrator* Kantakouzenos that the Turks plundered was situated near the Chora monastery.⁴³ The sources mention the house of Loukas Notaras⁴⁴ and that of

³⁴ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 94.

³⁵ Matschke, ‘Urban Economy’, 482; Clavijo (ed. López Estrada, 57; tr. Le Strange, 88) mentions the money-changers he encountered in the streets near the Gate opposite Pera.

³⁶ Canivet–Oikonomides, 67.

³⁷ MM II, 367.

³⁸ MM II, 533.

³⁹ MM II, 525.

⁴⁰ Matschke, ‘Urban Economy’, 473.

⁴¹ MM II, 393.

⁴² MM II, 385; ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ ὑδραγωγείῳ.

⁴³ Doukas, XXXIX.15–16: οἱ ... ἀζάπηδες ... κατέδραμον ... πρὸς τὴν Μεγάλου Προδρόμου μονὴν τὴν ἐπικεκλημένην Πέτραν καὶ ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῆς Χώρας ... Καὶ εἰς τὸν τοῦ πρωτοστράτορος οἶκον ἐμβάντες θησαυροὺς ἤνοιξαν

⁴⁴ Doukas, XXXIX.26

George Goudeles, who converted it into a poorhouse and hospital,⁴⁵ as well as the three-storey palace built by Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos.⁴⁶ The great house of Goudeles appears to have been located near the Forum Tauri,⁴⁷ while the luxury home of Notaras is referred to as having a tower, which some scholars identify with the so-called Tower of Eirene.⁴⁸ If the identification is correct, then the house of Notaras overlooked the city’s business quarter. A tower that survives beside the sea at the southern end of the land walls has been connected with the house of Theodore Kantakouzenos described by John Chortasmenos.⁴⁹ Apart from these cases, it is impossible to locate the house of any other official.

The fact is, however, that magnificent houses were being built, which some writers admire while others criticise them as a useless display of wealth. Chrysoloras indeed speaks of houses ‘which in size would have passed for cities.’⁵⁰ The houses that aroused comment, whether it was to exalt their magnificence or to condemn the vanity of their rich owners, were of three storeys and made an impression on all

⁴⁵ Chortasmenos, 157–9.

⁴⁶ Chortasmenos, 190–2.

⁴⁷ K.–P. Matschke, ‘Der Fall von Konstantinopel 1453 in den Rechnungsbüchern der genuesischen Staatsschuldenverwaltung’, *ΠΟΛΥΠΛΕΥΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ. Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Schulz – G. Makris (Munich–Leipzig 2000), 216

⁴⁸ Berger, ‘Zur Topographie der Ufergegend’, 158–9. See also A. Berger – J. Bardill, ‘The Representation of Constantinople in Hartmann Schedel’s *World Chronicle*, and Related Pictures’, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 22 (1998), 2–37, especially pp. 9–10.

⁴⁹ Urs Peschlow, ‘Mermerkule – ein spätbyzantinischer Palast in Konstantinopel’, *Studien zur byzantinischen Geschichte. Festschrift für Horst Hallensleben zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. B. Borkopp et al. (Amsterdam 1995), 93–7. More recently, see also idem, ‘Die befestigte Residenz von Mermerkule. Beobachtungen an einem spätbyzantinischen Bau im Verteidigungssystem von Konstantinopel’, *JÖB* 51(2001), 385–403. However, although the house had a sea view (Chortasmenos, 194), the description of it does not correspond in every particular to the surviving tower, and this would have been remote from the house of Theodore’s relative, the *protostrator* Kantakouzenos, which, as we have seen, seems to have been located near the Chora monastery.

⁵⁰ Chrysoloras, *Σύγκρισις*, 41: οἶαι ἤρκεσαν ἂν πόλεις εἶναι τῷ μεγέθει.

who saw them. While aristocrats had always built luxurious and indeed three-storey houses, the fact that during the period under review, there is such systematic reference to the wealth of certain mansions, suggests that they impressed contemporaries not only by their luxury but also by their architecture. What comes to mind, in association with Tafur's description of the houses of Pera and Buondelmonti's sketch-maps,⁵¹ are the aristocratic houses of Genoa; without being able to prove it, we consider it not unlikely that the rich inhabitants of Constantinople were building similar houses, influenced by neighbouring Pera but also by Genoa itself, with which they had close relations.⁵² Whether or not this was so, these houses were surely unusual and would not have resembled the 'low palace (χαμαιπάλατον) that the brothers Michael Raoul, Gabriel Palaiologos and John Palaiologos sold along with "the dining hall, upper room and first floor".⁵³

In this extensive part of the city we do not, given the nature of the terrain, encounter open spaces for public use. Elsewhere, the Hippodrome remained open; the semicircular colonnade adorning its curved end, the Sphendone, was still standing,⁵⁴ but as we have already said, the space was essentially abandoned and had lost its public character. From Bertrandon de la Broquière's description of the jousts to which the emperor's brother devoted himself with his friends, it seems that only a part of the arena was still in use.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Tafur, 149; Buondelmonti, 266–8.

⁵² A similar observation is made briefly by P. Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople: Built Environment and Urban Development', *EHB*, 536. The description of the house of Kantakouzenos does not point in this direction, however, in contrast to the remains of the Tekfur Saray, which show evidence of a western construction style: see C. Mango, 'Constantinopolitana', *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 80 (1965), 334 [= *Studies on Constantinople* (Aldershot 1993), no. II].

⁵³ MM II, 356: τὸ τρίκλινον μετὰ τοῦ ἀνωγέω καὶ τοῦ διπάτου.

⁵⁴ These were the columns seen by Buondelmonti, Clavijo (ed. López Estrada, 41–2; tr. L. Strange, 69–70), and the anonymous Russian (Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 142: "In it, are thirty columns standing at the Great Sea".

⁵⁵ Excerpts in Van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople*, II, 686. See also Clavijo, tr. Le Strange, 71

It is no doubt a commonplace to observe that urban space is full of multiple and continual significance, and all the more so in the case of Constantinople, a city that was a symbol, whose space at various points acquired successive symbolisms over the centuries. If we confine ourselves, for the purpose of the present analysis, just to its political significance in the 15th century, and to tracing the ceremonial movements of the emperor within Constantinople, we find that the evidence of the available sources is very meagre. Tafur confirms that, despite the lack of money, the imperial ceremonies took place as usual and with the magnificence that had always characterised them.⁵⁶ However, the latest information concerning official ceremonies organised in the city comes from Pseudo-Kodinos,⁵⁷ a text that is generally dated to the mid-14th century and may not reflect the period considered here. From our period, the only reference to an imperial procession within the city comes from a Turkish chronicler describing Constantine Palaiologos' ride from Hagia Sophia to the gate where he was going to fight.⁵⁸ In another context there is a description of the triumphal reception of John VIII when he returned from Italy. When the emperor arrived, he was welcomed by the crowd which had gathered at the harbour and which accompanied him in a triumphal procession as far as the Palace.⁵⁹ Syropoulos describes the emperor's return in much more detail: "we reached the Golden Gate and waited at the so-called Exartesis, where many of the officials came and made obeisance to the emperor".⁶⁰ Previously, the *kephale* of the City Paul Asan had awaited the emperor at the "suburb of the Theologos", i.e. the Hebdomon.⁶¹ All this happened at night; the

⁵⁶ Tafur, 145.

⁵⁷ Berger, 'Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions', 84–5. See also P. Magdalino, 'Pseudo-Kodinos' Constantinople', *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople*, no. XII.

⁵⁸ Balard, 'Constantinople vue par les témoins du siège de 1453', 174.

⁵⁹ Doukas, XX.8.

⁶⁰ Syropoulos, 544: κατελάβομεν τὴν Χρυσεῖαν Πύλην καὶ ἔστημεν εἰς τὴν λεγομένην Ἐξάρτησιν, οὗ ἦλθον πολλοὶ τῶν ἀρχόντων καὶ προσεκύνησαν τὸν βασιλέα. As Laurent (*ibid.*, 545 n.4) points out, this cannot refer to the Exartysis on the north side of the Golden Horn, but to an otherwise unattested arsenal near the Golden Gate on the Marmara shore.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, n.2.

next day, the Despot Constantine came with other officials to greet the emperor: “whence, accompanying him in solemn escort to the sound of trumpets, applause and songs of praise, they led him to the shore of the Kynegos”;⁶² where they disembarked and proceeded to the Palace on horseback.

The discussions regarding the union of the churches often required the emperor to go from the Blachernae Palace to Hagia Sophia, the seat of the patriarch. In fact, there was constant movement of people between these two points. The emperor, when going to the Patriarchate, went by boat to the eastern Imperial Gate, near the Sarayburnu,⁶³ and from there he ascended the avenue for a distance of 1200 metres as far as Hagia Sophia. When the patriarch set off on the Byzantine mission to Italy, he came in solemn procession down to the shore at *ta Eugeniou*, where a crowd of people had gathered, he boarded the waiting chief galley (καπιτανική τριήρη) that transferred him to Kynegos; there the emperor arrived the next day and they left on the same ship, accompanied by a flotilla of other galleys, “with trumpets and applause”.⁶⁴

We have no clear information on the movements of the officials, unless we read significance into a brief reference by Sphrantzes. The author, wishing to comment on the consequences of the council of Florence, quotes the dialogue that he had with some obviously unionist fellow citizens. They had apparently discovered an alternative route to Hagia Sophia, which they urged him to follow as well and to leave his usual itinerary by way of the Mese. In what is clearly a metaphorical description of the situation, Sphrantzes tells them: “I still want to travel by the road that for a long time I travelled with you”.⁶⁵ The vague reference by John Argyropoulos to the official Katablattas and his aimless rides along “the avenues” of the city does not tell us

⁶² Syropoulos, 544: ὄθεν καὶ προπέμποντες καὶ δορυφοροῦντες μετὰ κρότων καὶ σαλπίγγων καὶ παιάνων, ἀπέσωσαν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰγιαλὸν τοῦ Κυνηγού.

⁶³ Berger, ‘Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions’, 83.

⁶⁴ Syropoulos, 196.

⁶⁵ Sphrantzes, 80: ἐγὼ δὲ πάλιν διέρχεσθαι διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ, ἣν καὶ μεθ’ ὑμῶν πολὺν τινα χρόνον διερχόμεν.

much about his exact itineraries,⁶⁶ but it is most probable that he too, in order to be seen, which Argyropoulos says was his aim, would have followed the Mese or the street along the Golden Horn. A well-known ceremonial route, in use from at least the 6th century, was that which led to the church of the Virgin at Blachernae, going by way of the Forum of Constantine and down the Long Embolos to the Golden Horn, where it followed the coast to the north-west.⁶⁷ Finally, we know that the soldiers paraded Theologos Korax in disgrace from one of the Imperial Gates along “the avenue”.⁶⁸

The diplomatic requirements of the period – and especially the need for missions to the West – also frequently determined the movements of both the emperor and his men. As for foreign embassies, they moved between the harbour where they docked and the emperor’s residence at the Blachernae.⁶⁹

The movements described in the texts do not define the locations that had political significance in the period that interests us, in that the route followed is almost never specified. Besides, the descriptions by travellers and visitors always refer to the same places or buildings. All the same, it is interesting to note which points they chose to describe, and also which points the city’s inhabitants pointed out to them as worth visiting. Clavijo, for example, whose guide, by the emperor’s command, was Hilarion Doria, visited and described St John at Petra, the Peribleptos, the Stoudios monastery, the Hippodrome, Hagia Sophia, St George Mangana, the Blachernae, the Hodegetria, the Cistern of Philoxenos and the Aqueduct of Valens. All the travellers also describe at length the Column of Justinian, with its well-known symbolism.⁷⁰ Thus the Augousteion with Justinian’s monument was a fixed point of reference for all.

⁶⁶ Canivet–Oikonomides, 53.

⁶⁷ Berger, ‘Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions’, 81–2.

⁶⁸ Doukas, XXVIII.4.

⁶⁹ Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, 27–8; tr. Le Strange, 61; cf. Doukas, XX.8.

⁷⁰ See the table drawn up by Van der Vin, *Travellers to Greece and Constantinople*, II, 748–51. From this it is clear that all visitors to Constantinople refer to Justinian’s Column.

Although some secular or ecclesiastical buildings were still tourist attractions, and despite the fact that some of them retained their significance as monuments of a glorious past – which is why the intellectuals made the most of them,⁷¹ it seems, in the end, that they did not play an important role in everyday political life. No-one, neither the emperor nor his dignitaries, made anything of them in reality. In particular, the emperor seems to have ignored the inner city; M. Balard makes the interesting observation that in the accounts of the Fall the emperor is everywhere and nowhere, with the sole exception of his presence in Hagia Sophia and in defence of the walls.⁷² In the preceding years, we get a similar picture: the emperor appears only at the Blachernae palace, and only on very rare occasions in the city, at Hagia Sophia and at the church of the Holy Apostles.

In conclusion, reading the texts reinforces the impression that a focus of concentration for the inhabitants, if only for political reasons, was the harbour. This adds to the significance of the fact that Isidore of Kiev, in his encomium for John Palaiologos, dwells extensively on the emperor's initiative in restoring the Kontoskalion,⁷³ while in another encomium he admires the size of the harbours and the number of ships that docked there.⁷⁴ At all events, the repairs to the harbours and the walls are the only attested opportunities that the civil power had in order to manage the public space of the city.

In the 15th century, Constantinople showed that it no longer needed the remaining vestiges of its history as the capital of a formerly universal empire, nor even its magnificent churches, symbols of the religious centre that it had once been. The extraordinary military circumstances and the penury of the public treasury intensified the picture: the ancient Reigning City was a port-city that was detached from its past and had not yet found new elements to define its identity. Its strength was expressed in its market and the houses of its rich inhabitants.

⁷¹ Kiousopoulou, 'La notion de ville', 71–2.

⁷² Balard, 'Constantinople vue par les témoins du siège de 1453', 174.

⁷³ *PP* III, 298.

⁷⁴ *PP* III, 149.

2. Social Forces in Constantinople

A. Merchants and businessmen

Constantinople, through its geographical position, was an important centre of the transit trade of the eastern Mediterranean. Already for centuries, the economic life of the city was in the hands of the Italians, and secondarily in the hands of Byzantine merchants.¹

In the middle of the 14th century, Alexios Makrembolites, a fairly mediocre intellectual at the imperial court, wrote his *Dialogue of the rich and the poor*, in order to censure the rich men of his time through the mouth of the poor.² The terms that Makrembolites chooses to characterise the opposing social groups are worth noting: the term 'rich' (πλούσιος) denotes people who are both socially and economically strong, while the term 'poor' (πέννης) indicates social rather than economic weakness. In Makrembolites' perception, the poor, even though they constituted the productive part of society, lived a marginal and unhappy existence, while at the opposite extreme, the rich enjoyed their wealth without toil. Their behaviour, as described in

¹ The literature on Byzantine trade of this period is abundant. Of the older studies, see Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, and the two articles by A. Laiou–Thomadakis, 'The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries', *DOP* 34–5 (1980), 177–222, and 'The Greek Merchant of the Palaeologan Period: A Collective Portrait', *Πρακτικά της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών* [= *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium* (Aldershot 1992), nos. VII and VIII]. Reference to all the previous bibliography will be found in the two recent synthetic studies by K.–P. Matschke in the *Economic History of Byzantium*: 'The Late Byzantine Urban Economy, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries', *EHB*, 463–95; 'Commerce, Trade, Markets and Money, Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries', *EHB*, 771–806.

² I. Ševčenko, 'Alexios Makrembolites and his "Dialogue between the Rich and the Poor"', *ZRVI* 16 (1960), 187–228 [= *Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium* (London 1981), no. VII].

the text, was that of men of money: the basic component of their power was 'gold', to gain which these newly rich (νεωστὶ πλουτήσαντες) would sell even their soul.³ In this attachment to money, they differed from the men of old wealth (πάλαι πλουσίους), who used it to relieve the poor. The author considers the main source of this newly acquired wealth to be artisanship (ἐπιστήμη), and commerce (ἐμπορία), followed by thrift (ἐγκράτεια) and power (δυναστεία).⁴

I shall not deal at length with the content of the *Dialogue*, which has repeatedly occupied students of the 14th century. I shall simply note that while the *Dialogue* appears at first glance to be commenting on the age-old conflict between rich and poor – something unusual, anyway, in Byzantine literature – it also reveals another social conflict, that between the aristocrats and the 'middle class' (μέσοι). In other words, Makrembolites' text, written in the climate of the civil war between John Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos, echoes, in my opinion, a new reality in Byzantine society. The *mesoi*, that is those who had both money and a different economic mentality from the aristocrats known to Makrembolites, had begun to impinge on the collective consciousness as socially powerful, in a way that paralleled and evidently threatened the aristocrats, who had monopolised social power in previous centuries, combining political and economic dominance.

The *mesoi*, as they appear in the sources of the period, were for the most part engaged in trade, mainly in Constantinople, but also in other Byzantine cities – Thessaloniki, Monemvasia, Serres, Adrianople. They carried out local and regional trade, crossing the Aegean Sea or sailing along the coasts of the Black Sea. They transported wheat, wool, hides, furs, olive oil, cured fish, and, more rarely, luxury goods or slaves. In Constantinople they also handled the wholesale trade in foodstuffs, textiles, spices and perfumes.⁵ Apart from the merchants, the *mesoi* also included the bankers, the so-called 'changers' (καταλλάκτες) or 'silver-dealers' (ἀργυροπράτες). The 'exchange booths' (καταλλακτικά

³ Ibid., 209, 213, 215.

⁴ Ibid., 207.

⁵ Matschke, 'Commerce', 776–9.

τραπέζια or τραπεζοτόπια) were the places for money changing and the sale of gold and silver. There too loans were contracted. The legal interest rate did not exceed 6% for ordinary loans, 8% for commercial loans, and 12% for sea loans.⁶ In practice, however, it seems to have been much higher, adapted to the special circumstances of each occasion. We are in no position to estimate the ratio of small to great bankers, or the extent of their business. We know some instances of minor lenders, or perhaps usurers, lending small sums to people in need, as well as cases of more important bankers, such as the two partners from Adrianople, John Frangopoulos and John Basilikos, who moved to Kellia, at the mouth of the Danube, in 1366. In the space of 15 days, from 26 April to 10 May, they supplied grain traders with various loans, which, when they were repaid, totalled 2,000 *hyperpyra*.⁷ It was surely not by chance that Frangopoulos and Basilikos had chosen to exercise their banking activity at Kellia at the moment when the price of grain was high; besides, it is probable that the two partners had had other funds at their disposal, since the information about the repayment of the 2,000 *hyperpyra* comes from the archive of just one of the city's notaries. The case of the two partners has been much discussed in the secondary literature, since it is indicative of the development of Byzantine banking activity, not only in Constantinople but also in other cities and the entrepôts of the Black Sea where the grain supply trade was conducted. Finally, the owners of the transport vessels, and generally all tradesmen who lived off the sea, belonged to the 'middle' class.⁸ Of course, it must be noted that, in spite of what Makrembolites says, manufacturing had declined and manufactured products, like textiles and metal-ware, were now imported from Italy. However, the everyday needs of the urban population were served by the 'workshops' (ἐργαστήρια) that functioned in various locations, mainly near the market-place.⁹

⁶ Matschke, 'Urban Economy', 481–6.

⁷ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 65; Laiou-Thomadakis, 'Byzantine Economy', 196–7; Matschke, 'Commerce', 791.

⁸ Matschke, 'Urban Economy', 471–2; see also the description of Constantinople, above pp. 18–20.

⁹ Matschke, 'Urban Economy', 487. In Constantinople there are mentions of perfume, soap, nail, and *petararikon* workshops, and artisans such as coppersmiths,

The term *mesoi* is indicative of the status that Byzantine society reserved to traders, situating them between its two fixed poles, the nobles (εὐγενεῖς) and the populace (δῆμος). Gregoras called them ‘the third lot’ (τρίτη μοῖρα) and characterised them as ‘rabble’ (συρφετώδης).¹⁰ It was certainly not the first time that the *mesoi* had appeared in Byzantine history. Already from the end of the 10th century, with the revival of trade, they appeared in force as ‘those who have just started to get ahead’ (οἱ ἄρτι προκόπτειν ἀρξάμενοι) and for that reason met with contempt. Indeed, during much of the 11th century, at a time of conflict between the emperor and the ‘powerful’ (δυνατοί), they even gained temporary access to power,¹¹ which they lost, however, when the rise to the throne of Alexios I Komnenos saw the definitive triumph of the landed aristocracy. In the 14th century, the *mesoi* were again becoming conscious of their difference from the aristocrats and were often hostile towards them. When, in 1347, John Kantakouzenos sought a general contribution towards the construction of a fleet, he summoned an assembly (ἐκκλησία) at Constantinople, in which the aristocrats, craftsmen, merchants, clergy and people all took part. The aristocrats reacted by proposing that the merchants should undertake the expenditure, whereupon the opponents of Kantakouzenos headed by the money-changers (ἐκ τῶν ἐν ἐργαστηρίοις ἐμπορευομένων ἀργυραμοιβῶν) thwarted the plan.¹² It is also well known that the civil war between John Kantakouzenos, the most powerful representative of the high aristocracy, and John V Palaiologos, took the form of a struggle between the aristocrats and the *mesoi*, whom the regents of the under-age Palaiologos won over to their side. Kantakouzenos indeed accused his chief rival and member of the regency group Alexios Apokaukos of wanting with the support of the ‘mob’ (ὄχλος) to build a fleet and establish a ‘tyranny’,

pottery, embroiderers, shipbuilders and ropemakers: Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 103.

¹⁰ Nikephoros Gregoras, *Historia Byzantina*, ed. L. Schopen, II (Bonn 1830), 674.

¹¹ N. Svoronos, ‘Société et organisation intérieure dans l’Empire byzantin au XI^e siècle: les principaux problèmes’, *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Oxford 1966* (London 1967), 373–89 [= *Études sur l’organisation intérieure, la société et l’économie de l’Empire byzantin* (London 1973), no. IX]

¹² John Kantakouzenos, *Historia*, ed. B.G. Niebuhr, III (Bonn 1832), 33–43.

i.e. essentially a naval state that would include Constantinople, the islands and the coastal cities. Kantakouzenos gives the impression, albeit somewhat exaggerated, that the social stratum of the *mesoi* had or claimed a certain degree of power. It was anyway during this civil war that the Zealot revolt occurred in Thessaloniki.

At the end of the 1420s, i.e. less than a century from the period when Makrembolites was writing his *Dialogue*, there began the court career of a man who was destined, in the following decades, to gain great power and to become the strongest political figure in Constantinople after the emperor. I refer to Loukas Notaras, who was the chief minister (μεσάζων) of John VIII and Constantine Palaiologos. Notaras, making the most of his family tradition, was a rich businessman with economic interests in the Italian cities.¹³ He owned ships, he was a merchant and had bank accounts in Venice and Genoa. Let us recall that Loukas Notaras went down in history for the famous phrase that he pronounced on the eve of the Fall, and on account of which later generations placed him irrevocably in the camp of the anti-unionists: ‘Better the Turkish turban than the Latin mitre’.¹⁴ Formerly historians regarded him as an exceptional case. Today we can place him in the context of the social stratum that had formed in Constantinople around the turn of the 15th century, characterised mainly by business activity and a close, usually

¹³ The bibliography on the Notaras family and particularly on Loukas continues to grow. Apart from the comments of Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 19–20 and ff, see K.–P. Matschke, ‘The Notaras Family and its Italian Connections’, *DOP* 49 (1995), 59–72; idem, ‘Personengeschichte, Familiengeschichte, Sozialgeschichte: Die Notaras im späten Byzanz’, *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed età moderna: Studi in onore di Geo Pistarino*, ed. Laura Balletto (Genoa 1997), II, 787–812; Th. Ganchou, ‘Le rachat des Notaras après la chute de Constantinople ou les relations “étrangères” de l’élite byzantine au XV^e siècle’, *Migrations et diasporas méditerranéennes (X^e–XVI^e siècles)*, ed. M. Balard – A. Ducellier (Paris 2002), 149–229; Tonia Kioussopoulou, ‘Λουκάς Νοταράς: Ψήγματα μιας βιογραφίας’, *Κλητόριον εις μνήμην Νίκου Οικονομίδη*, ed. F. Evangelatou–Notara – T. Maniati–Kokkini (Athens–Thessaloniki 2005), 161–76.

¹⁴ E. Zachariadou, ‘Τα λόγια και ο θάνατος του Λουκά Νοταρά’, *Ροδωνιά. Τιμή στον Μ.Ι. Μανούσασκα* (Rethymno 1994), I, 139–40, 146. See also D. R. Reinsch, ‘Lieber den Turban als was? Bemerkungen zum Dictum des Lukas Notaras’, *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, ed. C. N. Constantinides–N. M. Panagiotakes–E. Jeffreys–A. D. Angelou (Venice 1996), 377–389.

personal association with the emperor.¹⁵ The members of this social group would certainly have answered Makrembolites' definition of the rich. They invested in trade and 'business', based their economic strength on gold and not on land, and instead of just building monasteries or doing good works to reinforce their social standing, they sent their money to Italian banks. The power and authority that Notaras had acquired show that a 15th-century court intellectual reflecting the views of the aristocracy would not have been able to comment on the behaviour of the rich men of money quite as disapprovingly as Makrembolites had done a century earlier.

If this is the case, however, we need to understand how social conditions were transformed in the second half of the 14th century, so that Makrembolites' criticism, even if it was still shared by certain groups, had by the 15th century been overtaken by events. It is also important to understand how in these circumstances the *mesoi* gradually disappear from the sources, or, to be exact, the distinction implied by this term is no longer evident. What interests us, in fact, is how the Byzantine ruling class in the 15th century came to be composed not only of the aristocrats but also of men involved in commercial and business activity.

Clearly, both the rich of Makrembolites and the example of Notaras point us to the group that stood at the top of the internal social hierarchy of the *mesoi*. The members of this group, whose role in Byzantine society will often concern us in what follows, co-existed with the merchants, involved in long or short-range ventures, the craftsmen, and the lesser moneylenders, as well as with the seamen who continued to keep the wholesale trade and local commerce in their hands.¹⁶ Other maritime groups were those of the fishermen and the 'straitsmen' (στενητῶν), who controlled the straits (στενὰ) of the Dardanelles.¹⁷

¹⁵ A. Ducellier, 'Le rôle de la fortune foncière à l'époque de la conquête turque', *Διεθνές Συμπόσιο, Πλούσιοι και φτωχοί στην κοινωνία της Ελληνολατινικής Ανατολής*, ed. Chryssa Maltezos (Venice 1998), 53–72.

¹⁶ Matschke, 'Urban Economy', 486f, commenting on the various specialised groups (mill-builders, diggers, builders, fishermen, rope-makers, perfumers, reapers and vine-growers)

¹⁷ Matschke, 'Commerce', 785, considers the *stenites* interesting, because their

The available sources for the study of trade and traders in the late period are, as often happens in the study of Byzantium, neither as abundant nor as informative as we could wish. The Byzantine sources, in particular, are extremely limited. No complete archives have survived, except for certain judicial decisions from the patriarchal tribunal, issued in the period 1399–1401, which settle differences between merchants or questions of debt repayment. The narrative sources rarely refer extensively to trade and traders, undoubtedly because of the disdain in which Byzantine aristocrats held them, at least in words. In contrast, the Italian archival evidence is more informative, to the extent that Byzantine merchants were involved in the Italian trade networks in the eastern Mediterranean. However, since the archives of the Italian cities concern essentially their own citizens, their information relating to Byzantine merchants is patchy.¹⁸ Indicative is the account book in which the Venetian merchant Giacomo Badoer recorded his transactions.¹⁹ The Byzantines represent something in the order of 31% of his customers, although their transactions do not exceed 18% of all Badoer's operations.²⁰

It is a known fact that in the Palaiologan period the Venetians and Genoese were dominant in the eastern Mediterranean, with Pisan, Florentine and Ragusan merchants appearing at times. The picture of their movements in the Black Sea, where the commercial activity of the later period mainly developed, has been adequately studied. Byzantine merchants participated in this activity with all the restrictions that were imposed on them by the dominant role of the Italians on the one

attitude to both the Turks and the Latins was dictated by their need for the avoidance of hostilities in the area of the Dardanelles.

¹⁸ The difficulties caused by the limited source material for the study of the economic life of Byzantine cities, compared with those of Italy in the same period, are discussed by A.P. Kazdhan, 'The Italian and Late Byzantine City', *DOP* 49 (1995), 3f.

¹⁹ *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli 1436–1440)*, ed. U. Dorini – T. Bertelè (Venice 1956), commented on by many historians. See also *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer (Costantinopoli 1436–1440). Complemento e indici*, ed. G. Bertelè (Padua 2002).

²⁰ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 104–5; Laiou–Thomadakis, 'The Greek Merchant', 111.

hand and by all the curbs of the Byzantine economic system on the other. Often, depending on the agreements they had with the Italian merchants,²¹ the emperor's subjects were not permitted to trade beyond Abydos, which effectively prevented them from carrying goods to Italy. With the passage of time, however, the presence of the Italians pushed the Byzantine merchants to come out of their isolation,²² and, as the restrictions became more elastic, individual traders ventured to Italy from Byzantine territory.²³ Some, moreover, dealt with the Turks in many parts of Asia Minor and Thrace,²⁴ while others went as far as Egypt.²⁵

Byzantine merchants operated as a rule within the framework of the partnership (συντροφία). The partnerships that they formed both among themselves and with Italian traders concerned in each case a specific journey, specific merchandise, and a limited space of time. In our period we find various forms of association and partners of varying economic capacity.²⁶ For example, the *oikeios* of the emperor Kyr George Goudeles formed a *syntrophia*, as he had done on previous occasions, with Manuel Koreses.²⁷ Goudeles shared in this partnership with the sum of 2,600 *hyperpyra*. Koreses invested 1,000 *hyperpyra* and his own labour, since he was going to travel for several months until October 1401, trading in Amisos (Samsun), Sinope and elsewhere in the 'upper sea' (εις την ἐπάνω θάλασσαν). We know about this partnership because the partners appeared as litigants before the patriarchal tribunal. The warfare in the region

²¹ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 39–40

²² Matschke, 'Commerce', 791.

²³ Catherine Otten-Froux, 'La représentation des intérêts byzantins en Italie', *BF* 22 (1996), 99–109.

²⁴ Matschke, 'Commerce', 785–6. A typical case is that of Asan, who was governor of Constantinople. Paul Asan bought wheat at Panidos in 1440 and brought it to the City in a Venetian ship.

²⁵ D. Jacoby, 'Byzantine Traders in Mamluk Egypt', *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και Κοινωνία. Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδη*, ed. Anna Avramea – Angeliki Laiou – E. Chrysos (Athens 2003), 249–67.

²⁶ For discussion, see Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 68–83; Matschke, 'Commerce', 789ff.

²⁷ MM II, 385.

did not allow Koreses to trade for long. Whatever he managed to buy within the stipulated time he loaded on to a ship and sent it to Constantinople to be received by his father. He kept only a portion of the merchandise, and set off on his return journey in spring, when conditions allowed. But the ship sank en route, and Koreses gave this as his reason for not paying the profits that he owed to Goudeles. Another merchant, Kyr Andreas Argyropoulos, had entrusted to his partner John Mamalis 'berberitza furs from Wallachia as surety' to the value of 587 *hyperpyra*,²⁸ while Constantine Angelos was due to travel to Chios with money from many men, among them a certain Euphemianos who had invested 100 *hyperpyra* in the voyage.²⁹ The partnerships of Byzantine merchants, with their temporary character and their comparatively small capital, could certainly not compete with the organised Italian firms that had their agencies in ports throughout the East.³⁰

Yet we know that rich merchants existed. Among them were the Goudeles family we have just mentioned. George Goudeles had trading links with Genoa, and indeed acted as representative of the emperor John VII when the latter wanted to export his wheat to that city.³¹ His son, John Goudeles, made himself rich during Bayezid's siege of Constantinople by selling at a high price grain that he transported in his ship from Genoese-occupied Chios.³² Goudeles' role in the commercial ventures of John VII no doubt explains his designation as the emperor's *oikeios*. It also points

²⁸ MM II, 374: γούνας βερβερίτζας ἀπὸ τῆς Βλαχίας χάριν παρακαταθήκης.

²⁹ MM II, 560–1.

³⁰ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 68ff.

³¹ Laiou–Thomadakis, 'Byzantine Economy', 22; M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e–début XV^e siècle)*, II (Rome–Genoa 1978), 758.

³² Laiou–Thomadakis, 'The Greek Merchant', 109. For the Goudeles family, see also D. Jacoby, 'Les Génois dans l'Empire byzantin: citoyens, sujets et protégés (1261–1453)', *Storia dei Genovesi* 9 (1989), 264–5 [= *Trade, Commodities and Shipping in the Medieval Mediterranean* (London 1997), no. III] and more recently, Nevra Necipoğlu, 'Constantinopolitan Merchants and the Question of their Attitudes towards Italians and Ottomans in the Late Palaeologan Period', *ΠΟΛΥΠΛΕΥΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ*, 251–63 and eadem, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins*, 134–5

the way forward in our attempt to answer the basic question that concerns us.

Both Goudeles and Notaras belonged to the social stratum that was made up at the time by the so-called *archontes*. The *archontes* were not only the members of the old landed aristocracy, but also men who had from early on become involved in commercial activities.³³ From the start, the latter were organised as businessmen, and some of them indeed belonged to families that had been active in trade for at least three generations. Many were descended from the provincial aristocracy, such as, apart from the Notaras family, those of Sophianos and Eudaimonoioannes, who moved to Constantinople from Monemvasia in the last quarter of the 14th century.³⁴ If the old aristocracy felt the need to invest in trade, when they lost their lands through the Turkish occupation, the business families we are discussing had a long and steady involvement in trade, and were familiar with the practices of the Italian merchants with whom they collaborated. Essentially, they constituted the middlemen, both in economic and in social terms, between the worlds of Italian and Byzantine trade. In 1391, Loukas' father, Nicholas Notaras, had rented one sixth of the sales tax in the Genoese colony of Pera. For the year 1398 alone, Notaras had investments worth 2,532 Genoese pounds in bonds of the public debt of Genoa, while, when the Bank of San Giorgio was founded on 1408, he acquired shares worth 12,100 pounds, which had risen in value to 27,600 pounds by 1420.³⁵ The movements in his account show that he had deals with the big mercantile names of Genoa, who it seems made deposited significant sums of money in the bank in his name.³⁶

The interesting thing about these 'aristocratic businessmen', as they have been called,³⁷ is that while serving their own commercial interests,

³³ Ducellier, 'Le rôle de la fortune foncière', 60–61.

³⁴ Laiou–Thomadakis, 'Byzantine Economy', 112–3; Matschke, 'Commerce', 797.

³⁵ Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, I, 347–9.

³⁶ Apart from Balard's analysis, see for recent discussion of the Notarades' deals, Ganchou, 'Le rachat', 158–67.

³⁷ Matschke, 'Commerce', 803

they also served the emperor. The last Palaiologoi used them as agents in the West for their own as well as the state's economic affairs. The steady weakening of the state and the loss of territory, combined with expenditure on defence and tribute payment to the Turks, caused severe deficits in the public treasury. We know that Manuel Palaiologos Iagaris, who, according to Badoer, had commercial dealings with the Venetians, appeared as a witness in the contracting of a loan (27 January 1424) from Venice by John VIII,³⁸ and that Constantine Palaiologos took out emergency loans for the city's defence with Loukas Notaras as guarantor.³⁹ We shall see later that members of these entrepreneurial families represented the emperor in his contacts with western rulers and the Pope, held state titles just like the offspring of the old aristocracy, with whom they maintained ties of kinship, and contributed to the planning of foreign policy, especially with regard to the union of the Churches. Besides, aside from their political presence, they supported the functioning of the city and the state in many ways with their economic strength, inasmuch as they controlled public finances, had the food and weapons supply in their hands, and, it seems, took charge of public works in many cases. We come across many revealing mentions of *archontes* involving themselves in the execution of public works.⁴⁰ The best known relates to Manuel Palaiologos Iagaris, who had undertaken the repair of the walls in the days of the final siege and was indeed accused of the misuse of public money.⁴¹ Less well known is the information concerning the repair of the Kontoskalion; many lay inhabitants and clerics of the city were hired to work there, and were overseen by 'the notables, appointed by the emperor'.⁴²

³⁸ Jorga V, 155.

³⁹ For details of the loans, see below p.102ff

⁴⁰ Manuel Bryennios Leontares in 1438 repaired the Gate of the Pege at his own expense, as attested by a surviving inscription: see Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*, 275. Another inscription, relating to Nicholas Kaballarios Agallon, is situated on the walls near the Charisian Gate (*ibid.*, 282).

⁴¹ Leonardos of Chios, 30: the references are to the translation by J. R. Melville Jones, *The Siege of Constantinople, 1453. Seven Contemporary Accounts* (Amsterdam 1972), 12–41.

⁴² *PP*, III, 298: οἱ πρόκριτοι, διατεταγμένοι παρὰ βασιλέως.

N. Oikonomides made the significant observation that the term *mesoi* disappears from the sources at the end of the 14th century.⁴³ Since the members of the old aristocracy, for lack of land, were also devoting themselves to commercial activity, they ceased to constitute a social group that was clearly distinct from the *mesoi*. Thus, the members of the ruling social class, the *archontes* of the 15th century, whether they came from the aristocracy or whether they were businessmen, undoubtedly had a different economic behaviour compared to the aristocrats of the immediately preceding century. However, they were keen to share in the exercise of power, and sought to gain the emperor's support and recognition.

B. The officials of the Patriarchate

The clashes of the period we are examining throw into relief the constant presence of another particular social group. This was the group of ecclesiastical dignitaries and learned men who clustered around the Patriarchate: the 'officials' (ὀφφικιάλοι) of the Great Church and the prelates who came from its ranks. Having developed internal mechanisms of reproduction, they formed a closed circle and claimed a special place in the social hierarchy.⁴⁴ One of them, the Grand Ecclesiarch Silvester Syropoulos, refers to 'our order' (ἡμέτεραν τάξιν), whose opinion he thought should be treated as decisive in matters of Union.⁴⁵ Events demonstrate that this order was held together by its claim to regulate ecclesiastical questions on every occasion,⁴⁶ and, from the moment when the Palaiologoi began to promote their unionist policy, by the need to become independent of the emperor's institutional capacity to intervene in the Church.⁴⁷

⁴³ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 119–23.

⁴⁴ The closed nature of this group is commented on by P. Gounaridis, 'Πολιτικές διαστάσεις της συνόδου Φερράρας–Φλωρεντίας', *Θησαυρίσματα* 31 (2001), 107–29; see also *idem*, 'Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος, προφήτης της καταστροφής', 1453. *Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση από τους μεσαιωνικούς στους νεώτερους χρόνους*, 133–45.

⁴⁵ Syropoulos, 498.

⁴⁶ Syropoulos, 240; *Oeuvres complètes*, III, 77–100.

⁴⁷ See the struggle over the 'third episcopate' of the patriarch Matthew I: V. Laurent, 'Le trisepiscopat du Patriarche Matthieu I^{er} (1397–1410)', *REB* 30 (1972),

The field of opportunity for the *offikialioi* as a discrete social group had already opened up in the 14th century. A definitive role in the separation of this group from the rest of society was played by the Hesychast controversy. The ascendancy of the Palamite wing in the leadership of the Patriarchate had exacerbated the Church's relations with the secular power and had alienated from Orthodoxy the most eminent representatives of the anti-Palamite party, like Demetrios Kydones.⁴⁸ Kydones served for many years as chief minister (μεσάζων) at the imperial court, and John V's conversion to Catholicism was due to his influence. He was a leading figure in the pro-Latin faction in Constantinople, an intellectual, translator and partisan of Thomas Aquinas. He and his pupils, Manuel Kalekas, the Chrysoberges brothers and Manuel Chrysoloras, were compelled to leave Constantinople at the end of the 1390s in order to escape the persecution that the Patriarchate had unleashed against them. Yet their opinions, both with regard to the political advantage of a Byzantine rapprochement with the West, and with regard to the character of the Church, had left their mark and continued to influence the learned

5–166. Manuel II Palaiologos reinstated Matthew to the patriarchal throne after his deposition by John VII. His opponents, led by Makarios of Ankyra and Matthew of Medeia, raised the objection of the 'third episcopate' (τρισεπίσκοπον), because he had successively occupied the episcopal sees of Chalcedon, Kyzikos and Constantinople, a fact which, according to their interpretation of the canons, invalidated his election as patriarch. The substance of the dispute does not interest us here, but the dispute is interesting because it reveals the tension that was brewing in the emperor's relations with the Hesychast tendency within the patriarchate. In his long treatise on the emperor's duties that was occasioned by the dispute, which ended with the emperor's victory in the synod of 1409, Makarios of Ankyra insisted that the emperor is the protector and servant of the Church, but not its master. It is worth noting that Matthew is characterised as 'the *archontes*' bishop' (ἀρχοντοεπίσκοπον). See also Syropoulos, 104: 'I consider it unworthy of his [the emperor's] virtue, wisdom, and contrite heart to impose servitude on the church of Christ, and for his successors to follow suit' (ἀνάξιον γὰρ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς συντετριμμένης ἐκείνου καρδίας ἡγοῦμαι, τὸ δουλείαν ὑποβαλεῖν τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐξ ἐκείνου οὕτως καὶ τοὺς ἐξῆς αὐτὴν διαδέχασθαι).

⁴⁸ P. Gounaridis, 'Ἐπιλογές μιας κοινωνικής ομάδας (14ος αἰώνας)', *Το Βυζάντιο ὄριμο για αλλαγές. Ἐπιλογές, εὐαισθησίες καὶ τρόποι ἐκφρασης ἀπὸ τὸν δέκατο στὸν δέκατο πέμπτο αἰώνα*, ed. Christina Angelidi (Athens 2004), 177–85.

emperor Manuel Palaiologos, who had studied with Kydones,⁴⁹ and the men in his entourage.

In these conditions, the mistrust that was cultivated on both sides, the Church and the State, grew as the emperors' attempts to draw closer to the West became more frequent. The demand for a council of Union, in which the doctrinal differences of the two Churches would be resolved so as to bring peace to the united body of the Church, had also been formulated by learned churchmen. Consequently, the point of friction in the following years was not the approach to the Pope as such, but the terms on which the approach would be undertaken and mainly the question of who, the emperor or the patriarch, would control the appropriate moves. In one sense, it was the initially concealed and then open disagreement over control of the union overtures that caused the officials of the Patriarchate to form a separate group. The preparations for the Councils of Basle and Ferrara – Florence, the Union Council of 1438–9 itself and its consequences gave the members of this group an institutional role: the 'holy assembly' (ἱερά σύναξις) that they constituted finally succeeded in replacing the resident patriarchal synod, taking advantage of the fact that the patriarch Gregory had left the City.⁵⁰ In the last years before the Fall, the group's sphere of activity became even broader and their cohesion was reinforced, a development to which George Scholarios contributed decisively by changing sides to join the anti-unionist faction.⁵¹

⁴⁹ J.W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425). A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick 1969), 416, maintains that we cannot study the personality of Manuel Palaiologos without taking account of the fact that Kydones was his mentor.

⁵⁰ See the remarks of M. Cacouros, 'Un Patriarche à Rome, un *Katholikos Didaskalos* au Patriarcat et deux donations trop tardives de reliques du Seigneur: Grégoire III Mamas et Georges Scholarios. Le Synode et la Synaxis', *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και Κοινωνία*, 71–124. For a commentary on these remarks see Th. Ganchou, 'Géorgios Scholarios, 'secrétaire' du patriarche unioniste Grégorios III Mamas? Le mystère résolu', *Le Patriarcat oecuménique de Constantinople aux XIVe–XVIe siècles: Rupture et continuité. Actes du colloque international. Rome 5–6–7 décembre 2005* (Paris 2007), 117–94

⁵¹ Marie-Hélène Blanchet, 'L'Église byzantine à la suite de l'Union de Florence (1439–1445). De la contestation à la scission', *BF* 29 (2005), 79–123, observes that the anti-unionist party gained substantial cohesion after the death of Mark Eugenikos in 1445, when Scholarios intensified his activity. I am grateful to Mme

The exact number of the officials of the Patriarchate is not known. The number of 800 clerics referred to as having served in Hagia Sophia of old and been supported by grain from Sicily,⁵² is probably exaggerated, but when due allowance has been made it reflects the size of the ecclesiastical staff even during the period we are examining. The officials had grown up in the Patriarchate, and it paid their salaries.⁵³ Besides, they had patron or teacher relationships with most of the episcopal hierarchy. The interesting thing is that the people we are talking about had all the means to preserve their position when they saw it being threatened mainly by the emperor and/or the secular officials.

Syropoulos records the names of many of the leading ecclesiastical officials and allows us to form an outline of their aims.⁵⁴ He himself, in his account of various events, clearly expresses the prevailing climate at the patriarchate at this critical time. It is, for example, characteristic that while the emperor, the patriarch and their officials were conferring about the Council of Basle, the patriarch declared himself insulted because he thought that the emperor laughed at his expense.⁵⁵ The patriarch's sensitivity in this particular instance, but also, more generally, the whole behaviour of his men highlights, as we shall see again in the following pages, the feeling of insecurity that possessed the ecclesiastical officials in regard to the emperor's actions. This sense of permanent uncertainty/insecurity can, in my opinion, also explain the fact that the ecclesiastical *offikialioi*, with only rare exceptions, were continually changing camp throughout the duration of the conflict provoked by the unionist Council of Florence. Indeed Syropoulos' narrative creates the impression that none of those who crossed over to Italy as representatives of the Church was a sworn

Blanchet for bringing her study to my attention.

⁵² Buondelmonti, 372.

⁵³ For the salaries of the patriarchal clergy during the period 1261–1453, see Eleftheria Papagianni, *Τα οικονομικά του εγγάμου κλήρου στο Βυζάντιο* (Athens 1986), 114–24. Syropoulos, 560, says that he refused his salary after his return from Florence.

⁵⁴ See Syropoulos, 184.

⁵⁵ Syropoulos, 138.

adherent of Union; Syropoulos presents some being dragged, some being forced, others as being paid by the Pope,⁵⁶ and certain others as putting their signature to the Union decree in return for the likelihood of being chosen by the emperor for the patriarchal throne. The case of the later patriarch Gregory, surnamed Mammes, is one of the most indicative.⁵⁷ Gregory, who according to Syropoulos was distinguished for his ‘many-faceted and versatile character’, foresaw, when he was preparing to participate in the council, that both the council and his participation would be the cause of much grief. In the course of the council he became *protosynkellos*, and he took part in the dogmatic discussions sometimes as a supporter and at other times as an opponent of Union. Syropoulos frequently speaks of Gregory’s contradictory and ambivalent behaviour with regard to people or doctrinal questions, and even to the prospect of Union. He also refers to his conflict with Mark Eugenikos over an issue of minor importance, on the order of sees, from which, however, the rift occurred according to Syropoulos. Gregory was among those who fell in with the Council’s decision, arguing that whether the Union happened or not, all those who were involved would be subject to anathema. Also eloquent is the conflict of words that the metropolitan of Russia had with Gregory, still *protosynkellos*, in Venice. According to Syropoulos, the *protosynkellos* said the following to the emperor, in order to stop the quarrel: “Lord, inform ... those present that no patriarch will be appointed here; certain people are troubled in their thoughts concerning this, so determine that you will not make a patriarch here, in order to calm the thoughts of those who are troubled”.⁵⁸ However much these details may be coloured by Syropoulos’ anti-Latin attitude, they show the disturbance that prevailed in ecclesiastical circles and the insecurity that we referred to earlier.

⁵⁶ ‘We have sold our faith’ (Πεπράκαμεν τὴν πίστιν ἡμῶν), the ecclesiastical officials are held to have said, according to Doukas (XXXI.9), when they returned to Constantinople.

⁵⁷ Gounaridis refers extensively to Gregory and his contradictory behaviour in ‘Πολιτικές διαστάσεις της συνόδου Φερράρας – Φλωρεντίας’, 115–18, with references to Syropoulos.

⁵⁸ Syropoulos, 484: Πληροφόρησον δέσποτα ... τοὺς παρόντας ὅτι ἐνταῦθα οὐ γενήσεται τις πατριάρχης· παράττονται οἱ λογισμοὶ τινῶν περὶ τούτου καὶ ὄρισον ὅτι οὐ ποιήσεις ἐνθάδε πατριάρχην, ἵνα εἰρηνεύσωσιν οἱ λογισμοὶ τῶν ταρρατομένων.

A few clerics maintained an unwavering stance. John Eugenikos, writing in the name of his brother Mark, distinguishes three groups among the ecclesiastical officials who took part in the council, and gives a clear evaluation of each according to their members’ position. There were the higher clergy who shamelessly signed “to accommodate the Latins”; there was the *megas chartophylax* Michael Balsamon who was obliged to sign “by force of circumstances”; and then there were the majority, about twenty, who on their return renounced their signature and denounced the Union.⁵⁹ Towards the last group Eugenikos shows relative tolerance, in contrast to bishops like the metropolitan of Herakleia or Isidore, metropolitan of Kiev, who are condemned, among other things, for their lack of moral integrity. A common narrative tone runs through the texts of Syropoulos and John Eugenikos, echoing, I believe, the strategy that the hard core of the Patriarchate had decided upon throughout the period; the dismissive reference to the primary architects of the decree of Union and the description of the reversion of the majority of the clergy were aimed at avoiding the defection of a great part of the ecclesiastical officials and as many in the unionist camp as they could influence. At the same time, however, that same strategy reveals that within the Patriarchate itself there were conflicting views as to what tactics to adopt. Besides, the participation of the patriarch and other clergy in the negotiations leading to the council of Union is revealing precisely of the fact that the bearers of ecclesiastical power at its various levels did not have a constant line and a united viewpoint.⁶⁰ And certainly, there were ecclesiastical officials who recognised the necessity of Union for saving Constantinople. At the same time, both Manuel and

⁵⁹ See in this connection Marie-Hélène Blanchet, ‘Les divisions de l’Église byzantine après le concile de Florence (1439) d’après un passage des *Antirrhétiques* de Jean Eugénikos’, *Hommage à Alain Ducellier: Byzance et ses périphéries*, ed. B. Doumerc – C. Picard (Toulouse 2004), 17–39, with the passage in question on pp. 37–8.

⁶⁰ Marie-Hélène Blanchet, *Georges Gennadios Scholarios (vers 1400–vers 1472). Un intellectuel orthodoxe face à la disparition de l’empire byzantin*, (Paris 2008), 224–34. For the conflicts within the Patriarchate after the Fall see Marie-Hélène Blanchet, ‘L’Union de Florence après la chute de Constantinople: La profession de foi de Léon le Nomophylax et de Macaire de Nicomédie (1462–1464)’, *REB* 67 (2009), 59–75

John tried to turn the internal conflicts of the Church to their advantage and to secure the election of patriarchs who, even if they did not agree with imperial policy on all points, at least would not undermine it or strengthen by their authority the opposition of the officials.

P. Gounaridis, studying the stance of this group during the Council of Florence, brings out the personal differences of its members and their opportunism, as well as the small tactical moves that they invented in order to support themselves and each other according to the circumstances.⁶¹ Thus emerges what we have already referred to briefly: their insecurity and their defensive stance with regard to events. I am of the opinion that the patriarchal circle was on the defensive because, it seems, it had lost its strength in Constantinople.⁶² In spite of the fact that, especially after the Council, the officials were able to regroup their forces, until the Fall, they did not succeed in making the alliances they wanted outside the Patriarchate. At all events, their collaboration with the emperor's brother, Demetrios Palaiologos, who maintained an anti-Unionist stance in his bid for the throne, had proved ineffectual. The *mesazon* Loukas Notaras answered a letter of Scholarios with a dismissive tone: "You are wasting your time, father, because the commemoration of the Pope is going to be made, and it cannot be otherwise".⁶³

As regards the economic situation of the church officials, it cannot have been rosy.⁶⁴ It is not known how much of the Patriarchate's property remained to it during the period we are examining. At the beginning of the 15th century, the patriarch Matthew complained of the hardship of the Great Church,⁶⁵ and on another occasion asked

⁶¹ Gounaridis, 'Πολιτικές διαστάσεις της συνόδου Φερράρας - Φλωρεντίας', 118–23.

⁶² A. Ducellier and Th. Ganchou, 'Les élites urbaines dans l'Empire d'Orient à la fin du Moyen Âge: noblesse de service ou groupe de pression?', *Les élites urbaines au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1997), 39–54, esp. 53–4, emphasise the nexus of ties between the landowning aristocracy and the Church, which depended, from the 14th century onward, on the support of the Turks.

⁶³ PP II, 127.

⁶⁴ Papagianne, *Τα οικονομικά του εγγάμου κλήρου*, 122.

⁶⁵ MM II, 470.

the metropolitan of Gothia to send to the "patriarchal cell" the revenues of "the patriarchal domain known as Gialita", where certain clerics had appropriated the revenues from the churches or sold patriarchal lands.⁶⁶ It is characteristic, too, that the metropolitan of Medeia caused uproar at court, as well as dismissive comment from the emperor, when he asked for "the two years' income, which he had as a benefaction from the imperial rights in Medeia".⁶⁷ Syropoulos further describes how the members of the Byzantine delegation insistently demanded money from the papal representatives, even engaging in minor intrigues.⁶⁸ Moreover, the personal economic transactions conducted by certain Patriarchal officials and clerics were condemned by the ecclesiastical tribunal, but were probably not infrequent.⁶⁹

The foregoing indications are not sufficient for us to estimate the economic situation of the Patriarchate in the 15th century. Of course, the Church of Constantinople maintained economic ties with the other Orthodox Churches, of which it was the head. According to Syropoulos, when the discussions about the impending council were taking place, the Patriarch was said to have told the emperor that the bishops of Russia, Pekion (Peč), and Iberia were in a position to contribute large sums, if the planned Council of Union were held in Constantinople.⁷⁰ However, the regular patriarchal revenues had been diminished by the course of events. To begin with, as the state of public finance grew worse, it was difficult for the Patriarchate

⁶⁶ MM II, 75.

⁶⁷ Syropoulos, 124: τὸ προσόδιον χρόνων δύο, ὅπερ εἶχεν εὐεργεσίαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν Μηδεία βασιλικῶν δουλειῶν.

⁶⁸ Syropoulos, 482.

⁶⁹ See MM II, 170: the hieromonks of Methone accused the bishop of Methone of "paying 800 florins to the Great Church in order to remove his church from the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Patras". In another instance (MM II, 321), the 'lighting officer' (ἀρχων τῶν φώτων), the deacon Manuel Chalkeopoulos promises that he will fulfil his duties and "that none of the priests will ask anything whatever of him ... for this or any service and that he will not inflict any imposition on any of them". See also MM II, 153, 158.

⁷⁰ Syropoulos, 120: "if we need money for expenses, it is possible to raise more than a hundred thousand *hyperpyra*".

to receive imperial aid, which had, in any case, been significantly curtailed from the middle of the previous century.⁷¹ It had also suffered reductions in its landholdings outside Constantinople, along with the revenues they produced, and, probably, in the rents it drew from its properties in the City. Moreover, the contributions from the metropolitan sees now in Turkish territory had fallen steeply. The Turkish occupation of Asia Minor had resulted in a dramatic change in the ecclesiastical map of the area, as many metropolitan sees were abolished or fused with others, while those that remained had lost a large part of their flock and their properties.⁷² Finally, the patriarchate had to face the intrusion of the Catholic church even in areas of its own jurisdiction. The consequences of this infiltration were many and occurred on many levels. The Patriarchate lost not only revenue, which now went to the representatives of the Catholic Church, but also its power of persuasion. The Dominican friars established in Pera worked systematically for the conversion of the Orthodox,⁷³ and had relations with Byzantine intellectuals.⁷⁴ The fact that many of the secular officials had turned to Catholicism⁷⁵ is a clear indication of the Patriarchate's retreat.

In these circumstances, the insecurity of the officials of the Great Church, the *stavrophoroi* as they were called, was not due, or due not only to their bad economic situation. It was due mainly to the fact that they had lost their traditional allies in the upper strata of Byzantine society. Syropoulos relates many characteristic details,

⁷¹ Papagiannē, *Τα οικονομικά του εγγάμου κλήρου*, 121–2.

⁷² Sp. Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through The Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley–Los Angeles 1971)

⁷³ Claudine Delacroix–Besnier, *Les Dominicains et la chrétienté grecque aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (Rome 1997), 186–97.

⁷⁴ The best known is Scholarios, who in the 1430s was in contact with the Dominican prior of the convent of San Domenico in Pera, Lodisio de Tabriz: see Marie–Hélène Blanchet – Th. Ganchou, ‘Les fréquentations byzantines de Lodisio de Tabriz, dominicain de Pera (†1453): Géorgios Scholarios, Ιωάννης Chrysolôras et Théodôros Kalékas’, *Byzantion* 70 (2005), 70–103.

⁷⁵ Claudine Delacroix–Besnier, ‘Conversions constantinopolitaines au XIV^e siècle’, *Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome* 105 (1993), 715–61.

which reveal the contempt with which the emperor and his officials treated them,⁷⁶ and thus demonstrate the isolation of the patriarchal staff.⁷⁷ For example, the discussion that Philanthropenos had with certain *stavrophoroi*, in order to persuade them to sign the union decree of Florence, ended with his expressive remark: “There is no way that I can report such statements. The emperor has had enough ... now you can make some accommodation and concession.”⁷⁸ Even more characteristic are the relations of Notaras with Eugenikos, Scholarios and Syropoulos himself, who speak with distress of the *mesazon's* habitual ‘accommodations’ (οικονομίες) and criticise him for taking the side of the ‘Latin–minded’ (Λατινόφρονες).⁷⁹ From the surviving letters of Eugenikos and Scholarios it clearly emerges that while Notaras spoke to them initially in his role as intermediary between the imperial party and the anti–Unionists, even sending food to Scholarios who had already become a monk,⁸⁰ as time passed he delayed more and more in replying to their insistent requests.⁸¹

It becomes clear that the ecclesiastical dignitaries maintained an *esprit de corps* that characterised the patriarchal clergy, mainly in the face of the emperor and his officials. Again it is Syropoulos who expresses that *esprit de corps* when he attributes the corresponding sentiment

⁷⁶ Syropoulos, 124, 164, 190–2. Discussing the expenses of the Council and the distribution of the available funds, the emperor considered that there was no reason for a large number of useless people to take part on the Church's side: ἐλθέτωσαν ὀλιγώτεροι καὶ ἀναγκαῖοι. More characteristic, however, is his remark, “I am afraid that some monk might come and let out some remark that will cause us great damage” (Syropoulos, 172).

⁷⁷ John Eugenikos says it more clearly than all when he writes, perhaps with reference to Notaras, of “those who formerly stood by us and confirmed with powerful oaths that they would remain in and observe their beliefs, but then suddenly changed and left us as the sole believers”.

⁷⁸ Syropoulos, 488–90: Οὐδὲν δύναμαι ἵνα ἀναφέρω τοιοῦτους λόγους. Ὁ βασιλεὺς βαραίται ... ποιήσατε καὶ ἡμεῖς οἰκονομίαν τινα καὶ συγκατάβασιν.

⁷⁹ *PP* II, 202–12; Notaras' *oikonomies* are also mentioned by Syropoulos, 152.

⁸⁰ *PP* II, 197, 208–9.

⁸¹ *Oeuvres complètes*, III, 150–1; Eugenikos in a letter to Scholarios (*PP* I, 159) criticises Notaras for misleading them. See also *PP* I, 170–3, 175–6, for Eugenikos' letters to Notaras.

to the *archontes* “striving on the emperor’s behalf”.⁸² Formulating it differently, John Eugenikos distinguishes the position of those who thought like him from “almost all the *archontes* eagerly ... rushing towards the artificial union with their piety – they say – intact, all for ships and gold coins and western aid, and generally mere human considerations”.⁸³ At the same time, the patriarchal *offikialioi* formed their closed and intransigent group with the characteristics of a bureaucratic machine. Because of their isolation they gradually adopted an ever more rigid position even towards those whom they merely suspected of being their opponents,⁸⁴ and they tried to preserve the purity of their group, imposing increasingly severe penalties on those clerics who deviated.⁸⁵ At the same time, it is not without significance that the patriarchal officials hardened their position especially at moments when the secular leadership of Constantinople was facing difficulties. We can see this in the fact that five confessions of faith by Latinophiles date from the time of the siege by Bayezid in 1396, and also from the fact that the ‘holy assembly’ (ιερά σύναξις) made a point of asserting itself just before the Fall, when Constantine Palaiologos was about to come to the City as emperor.⁸⁶

At moments of general anxiety and of the despair, variously attested, that was felt by the City’s inhabitants, the anti-Unionist faction of the Patriarchate strove to broaden its influence among those whom Doukas calls the “vulgar and common mob”. Doukas, who

⁸² Syropoulos, 104: ὑπὲρ βασιλέως ἀγωνιζομένους; a little later he comments that “the basileus arranged the interests of his State in an imperial way” (τὰ τῆς βασιλείας διεξῆγε βασιλικῶς).

⁸³ *PP* I, 127: πάντας ἤδη σχεδὸν τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐκθύμως ... ὠρμημένους ἐπὶ τὴν κατεσχηματισμένην ἔνωσιν, σωζομένης, φασί, τῆς εὐσεβείας αὐτῶν, καὶ διὰ τριήρεις καὶ χρυσίνους καὶ δυτικὴν βοήθειαν καὶ λογισμοὺς ἀνθρωπίνους.

⁸⁴ See the accusations of Kydones and Kalekas relative to the acts of violence by the men of the Patriarchate against their opponents. Kalekas himself (pp. 156–7) claims in a letter that he was forced to flee the City because of the violence of the official Church. Indicative too, in the same context, is Constantine Asan’s confession of faith (MM II, 267), but much more typical is the expulsion of the patriarch Matthew I.

⁸⁵ MM II, 172.

⁸⁶ Cacouros, ‘Un Patriarche à Rome’, 110.

characterises those who refused to attend the common liturgy that was celebrated in Hagia Sophia (12 December 1452) “the dregs of the Hellenic race”, gives the impression that there were numerous disturbances.⁸⁷ Scholarios, too, like Syropoulos, gives the impression of a great multitude when he asserts that his fellow citizens on the whole refused to attend the liturgies where the celebrants were unionist priests: “all the inhabitants of this city are pious, apart from a few who yet allow themselves to be corrupted by popish money, sinning even more than those who let this happen”.⁸⁸ The resonance of anti-Unionist views, and hence the influence of the Patriarchal officials on the popular level is difficult to estimate, for the additional reason that those involved themselves give contradictory information. For example Scholarios, while asserting that all the inhabitants were “pious”, elsewhere deplored the fact that most people, accepting the papal legate’s promises without putting them to the test, “boom like empty wine jars with any noise that is made, whence unspeakable threats and clamourings have arisen against us”.⁸⁹ In any case, there were several other factors that would have widened the social base of the anti-Latin ‘party’ in Constantinople: the great economic inequality that prevailed, according to many testimonies,⁹⁰ the state of war and the long-brewing Byzantine distrust of Westerners,⁹¹ combined with the oracular prophecies about the submergence of Constantinople beneath the sea that would also herald the end of the world.⁹² The basic

⁸⁷ Doukas, XXXVI.6: τρυγία τοῦ γένους τῶν Ἑλλήνων.

⁸⁸ *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, 145: καὶ οἱ τὴν πόλιν ταύτην οἰκοῦντες εὐσεβοῦσιν οἱ πάντες, πλὴν ὀλίγων τινῶν τῶν τοῖς παπικοῖς καὶ πάλιν ἀνασχομένων τραφήναι κακῶς χρήμασι, χεῖρον ἀμαρτανόντων τῶν συγχωρησάντων τοῦτο παθεῖν; Syropoulos, 556.

⁸⁹ *Oeuvres complètes*, X, 177: οἱ πολλοὶ βασάνων ἄνευ δεχόμενοι ... βοῶσι μόνον ἂν τις ἐνηγήσειε καθάπερ οἱ πίθοι, κἀντεῦθεν ἀπειλαὶ καὶ βοαὶ καθ’ ἡμῶν ἠγέρθησαν ἄρρητοι.

⁹⁰ Nevra Necipoğlu, ‘Social and Economic Conditions in Constantinople during Mehmed’s siege, 1453. *Η ἀλώση της Κωνσταντινούπολης*, 75–86.

⁹¹ Oikonomides, *Hommes d’affaires*, 23–33.

⁹² For the oracles, see Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, ‘Byzance et la fin du monde. Courants de pensées apocalyptiques sous les Paléologues’, *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople*, ed. B. Lellouch – St. Yerassimos (Paris 1999), 55–97. For the well-known prophecy according to

argument of the anti-Unionists was well thought-out and certainly persuasive: union, or ‘Latinising’, would accelerate the awaited catastrophe that would come as punishment for transgression of the faith.⁹³ What is certain, however, is that whatever the resonance of their ideas with the city populace, the patriarchal officials had lost their alliance with the imperial *archontes*, who were hostile to them.⁹⁴

So an almost paradoxical situation was taking shape. On the one hand, the Patriarchate maintained the respect of areas, like Russia or Serbia, that were not Byzantine; indeed, it has been well put that “the Patriarchate was replacing the empire as a focus of unity among the Orthodox nations of Eastern Europe”.⁹⁵ In its own base of Constantinople, however, its officials were isolated from the members of the secular government, finding their only solid support among the clergy and monks of the capital.

The secular *archontes* and the patriarchal officials constituted the two basic social groups who shaped the two principal dimensions of political life in the 15th century: foreign policy and relations between Church and State. The two groups were in conflict, since their interests did not coincide and neither needed the other’s support for its survival. More exactly, the two groups followed divergent survival strategies in a period of insecurity for all concerned.

which, when the infidels arrived, an angel would give the emperor a sword, and he would chase them as far as the Lone Tree, see St. Yerassimos, ‘De l’arbre à la pomme: la généalogie d’un thème apocalyptique’, *ibid.*, i65–8. For more general comments on the echoes of anti-unionist ideas combined with eschatological traditions in Constantinople, see Tonia Kiousopoulou, ‘Η κοινωνική διάσταση της σύγκρουσης ανάμεσα στους ενωτικούς και τους ανθενωτικούς τον 15ο αιώνα’, *Μνήμων* 23 (2001), 33–5.

⁹³ See the letter to his fellow citizens that Scholarios hung on the door of his cell (Doukas, XXXVI.3): “And on top of the captivity that will happen to you, you have lost your ancestral faith and confessed impiety”.

⁹⁴ See Syropoulos, 572: “Those who favoured union behaved to us with great aggressiveness, brandishing fearful threats, because they thought that the orthodoxy of union was already a *fait accompli*”.

⁹⁵ A. Papadakis–J. Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy. The Church from 1071 to 1453*, (New York 1994), 310.

The secular *archontes* were western oriented, both because their contacts with the Italian cities served their economic interests, and because they hoped, at intervals, that western aid would remove the Turkish danger. Moreover, since Catholic doctrine had more to say about the role of money,⁹⁶ it provided the ideological framework that Byzantine businessmen also needed in order to extend their activity. Of course we do not know whether or how far these men were directly exposed to western theological or philosophical texts. However, their transactions with Pera no doubt brought them into contact with the Dominicans who exerted great influence in the Genoese colony. Besides, the entrenched and intransigent attitude of the Patriarchate provided the ‘Latin-minded’ *archontes* and the intellectuals who expressed their views the justification they needed for turning to Catholicism and withdrawing from the Orthodox Church, as the ecclesiastical officials saw it – something which predisposed the officials to be wary of them.

For its part, what the patriarchate most needed, for both economic and ideological reasons, in the conditions of the steady expansion of the Turks and the penetration of its jurisdictional area by the Catholic Church, was a unified control. It is characteristic that its representatives in the former Byzantine provinces made common cause with that section of the landed aristocracy which was affected by the pro-western policy of the Palaiologoi, and which, already from the previous century, had clearly decided that the possibility of an agreement with the Turks was more in its interests. The Patriarchate could see, moreover, that its future lay mainly in the Balkans and Russia, where its influence was undoubted and gave it a sense of ecumenicity. In its conflict with the secular *archontes* a decisive role was played by this sense and/or need of ecumenicity, which on the political level generated the false hope of a possible revival of the formerly ecumenical Byzantine Empire, in which the Church would regain its shaken authority. It has been suggested that the closed circle of the Patriarchate cultivated an ‘Orthodox utopia.’ This utopia had political origins and undoubted political consequences, the most

⁹⁶ Note that the 13th century saw the invention of Purgatory for those who fell into the sin of greed, notably usurers: see J. Le Goff, *La Bourse et la vie. Économie et religion au Moyen Âge* (Paris 1986).

important of which was the rejection of imperial authority formulated by the hieromonk Joseph Bryennios. Bryennios gave shape to the idea of the entrenched Orthodox utopia, which in essence denied the existence of the 'Empire of the Romans',⁹⁷ in the form that it was taking, in my opinion, under the last Palaiologoi. This point about the rejection of authority, especially under the last Palaiologoi, is useful for our discussion, since the Patriarchal officials did not question the imperial institution in general; from very early on, they regarded John VII, who had nothing to do with the question of Union, as a saint.⁹⁸ In addition, the stigma of 'Latinising' as a betrayal of the Orthodox faith that the ecclesiastical officials cast against their opponents gave an ideological cloak to the retrenchment in which the Church found itself. In the 15th century, this ideology found clear expression in their antagonism with the *archontes*, and brandished the threat of the moral and real destruction of the Orthodox people as a strategy for making itself accepted as widely as possible by the faithful.

In the end, the conflict over the union of the Churches, which was a real problem or more exactly aimed at resolving the real demand for aid from the West, concealed a political clash in which the present and future of Byzantium were at stake. If the Church's representatives favoured the reconstitution of the ecumenical empire, what was the kind of state that interested the imperial *archontes*? We should consider whether, as I am supposing from the outset, the secular officials promoted the idea of a 'national' state. This is an interesting perspective from which to examine how they tried to organise the state they served, and how it was actually organised.

⁹⁷ Gounaridis, 'Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος', 142–4.

⁹⁸ G.T. Dennis, 'John VII Palaiologos: "A Holy and Just Man"', *Βυζάντιο. Κράτος και Κοινωνία*, 205–17.

PART 2

POLITICAL POWER IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

1. Political Personnel

A. The persons

So far the analysis of social forces has showed that the people who made up the secular social and political élite drew their economic strength mainly from entrepreneurial activity. It appears, moreover, from the preceding survey that the historical research of recent years has been focusing its attention more and more often on the individuals who belonged to this élite and on their social role. From the studies of N. Oikonomides, N. Necipoğlu, K.-P. Matschke and others we now know the names and the activities of many of the men who, in one way or another, were close to the emperor, took part in the exercise of power, and constituted the members of political society.

However, despite the continual advances of this research, we have not yet arrived at an overall picture of these people, and we do not know in all its detail the collective physiognomy of all who held political power in the 15th century. Undoubtedly, the search for collective profiles is based on research into individual biographies or parallel individual characteristics. Individual characteristics are useful for the better the understanding of collective behaviour, and, conversely, social mechanisms make individual cases more comprehensible, to the extent that the historian can find the balance between the individual and the collective. As a prerequisite for sketching the political personnel, it is therefore essential to establish a prosopography of the men who were in the service of the state and shaped its policies in a wide network of social relations. It is well known, however, that the biographies of Byzantine aristocrats are very difficult to reconstruct. For most of them the information is extremely sporadic, with the result that it is sometimes difficult

even to know when different mentions of the same name refer to the same person.¹ All the same, the few persons whose biographies can be reconstructed, if only partially, throw some light on the political scene in the fifty years before the Fall.

First of all, we have to locate the people under discussion in the disparate surviving sources. This is by no means a clear or straightforward task, since we do not always know what to make of the huge silences of the sources. It is reasonable, to a certain extent, to suppose that the sources preserve the names of those who stood high in the state or court hierarchy and, correspondingly, fail to mention those who carried out administration on a more practical level. It is also a reasonable assumption that, since the surviving sources are the result of a selection that was undoubtedly made after the Fall by learned churchmen and monastic scribes,² certain information, notably that concerning secular individuals, is irretrievably lost.

Apart from the difficulties referred to above, that is the difficulty of securely identifying persons who are mentioned only under their family name, a significant problem for the historian comes from the very definition of their political function. To get over this problem, I have chosen as the primary criterion for searching and locating people in the sources, and consequently as the basic criterion for placing them in the political establishment, either the holding of a dignity, or a position at the imperial court, or participation in the many and frequent embassies that took place in this period, or, finally, participation in ecclesiastical bodies that took political decisions, such as the council of 1409 or the council

¹ See the successful identifications made by Th. Ganchou, 'Le mésazon Démétrius Cantacuzène a-t-il figuré parmi les défenseurs du siège de Constantinople (29 mai 1453)?', *REB* 52 (1994), 245–72; idem, 'Sur quelques erreurs relatives aux derniers défenseurs Grecs de Constantinople en 1453', *Θησαυρίσματα* 25 (1995), 61–8; idem, 'La famille Koumousès (Κουμούσης) à Constantinople et Négrepont avant et après 1453', offprint *Πρακτικά Βενετία-Εύβοια. Από τον Έγριπο στο Νεγρόποντε*, (Βενετία-Αθήνα 2006); idem, 'Ilario Doria, le gambros génois de Manuel II Paléologos: Beau-frère ou gendre?', *REB* 66 (2008), 71–94

² N. Oikonomides, 'Η Αναγέννηση και το Βυζάντιο', *Βυζάντιο και Ευρώπη* (Athens 1987), 247–53.

of Ferrara – Florence. In other words, I have treated as members of the political establishment not only those individuals who formed policies or put imperial decisions into effect, but also the men who served the emperor personally in his immediate entourage, such as his secretaries.

As a rule, all the people who are referred to in the narrative sources had some sort of political function; that is why the historians of the 15th century mention them. At the same time, although most of the intellectuals of the period had, as we shall see, a designated service in writing encomia and funeral orations for the emperor, I have not regarded them as political personnel, unless they bore some title, such as for example John Argyropoulos who is referred to as a senator. As for the persons recorded in the few remaining archival sources, they are included only insofar as they were engaged in political activity. That is, I have not counted people who belonged to aristocratic families but do not appear to have met any of the criteria I have posited. Finally, for reasons which I shall explain in due course, I have treated as a separate category persons who occur with the title of *oikeios*, even though certain of them did not apparently carry out any particular political function in the period that concerns us.

The individuals who appear in the sources with the designation *archon* and/or as having a particular political function or mission are eighty in all. Forty-eight of them were active in the reign of Manuel II. Of them, twelve also turn up in the reign of John VIII, along with the twenty-three who make their appearance then for the first time. There are only three new faces at the court of Constantine XI, where seven former dignitaries of John also served. In all, only three persons (Andronikos Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, Manuel Palaiologos Iagaris, and George Sphrantzes) appear constantly throughout the whole period under review. We also notice that only twenty people appear, from the beginning and throughout, with a dignity, whereas the rest are designated simply in the role of the emperor's *oikeioi*. Finally, a total of ten persons appear as members of embassies, without any mention of a dignity or court title.

In general, we should note that we are unable to trace many individuals over the course of time. For example, we are not in a position to follow the progress of most of the *oikeioi* of Manuel Palaiologos, since we know them only from the judicial decisions of the Patriarchate that come from a specific time period (1399–1402). As for the others, whose biography we can piece together in a rudimentary way, we see that there are no dignitaries who disappear from the court from one reign to another, unless they have died in the meantime. Some of those who had a continual presence at court acquired more and more elevated titles. Typical cases are Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites, who was successively *protovestiarites*, *megas primmikerios* and finally (1449) *megas stratopedarches*, and the *megas doux* Loukas Notaras who began his career as a member of an embassy to the Turks and as an interpreter. Correspondingly, Manuel Palaiologos Iagaris, who appears in 1400 as *oikeios* of the emperor, later acquired the title of *protovestiarites*, followed by that of *protostrator*, and, finally, is mentioned as *megas stratopedarches* in 1438. It is also worth noting that, from the regime of one emperor to another in the 15th century, the sons or sons-in-law of former imperial dignitaries keep their position in the political establishment,³ though in some cases with a higher rank. For example, Loukas Notaras was son of the Grand Interpreter (*megas diermeneutes*) Nicholas Notaras, while the *megas domestikos* Andronikos Palaiologos Kantakouzenos was son of Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, uncle of Manuel; the *protostrator* Kantakouzenos mentioned by Doukas at the time of the Fall was son of the *mesazon* Demetrios Palaiologos Kantakouzenos.

Apart from the Palaiologoi, the persons in question belonged to the family of Kantakouzenos (7 persons), and to five other families (Notaras, Disypatos, Goudeles, Asan, Leontares). Seventeen bore the name of Palaiologos in addition to their other family name, which indicates kinship with the emperor. The kin group of the imperial family also included the Philanthropenoi who were explicitly

³ See the comment of Sphrantzes, 46: "... an excellent horse, which the emir gave to Isaac Asan when they met. Asan gave it to his son-in-law George Philanthropenos, and he in turn to his nephew Komnenos, the son-in-law of the *protostrator* Kantakouzenos".

designated as cousins (ἑξάδελφοί) of the emperor. With the passage of time, the families in question became linked by intermarriage, which was surely a means to strengthening their power.⁴ If we want to draw the general lines of the marriage strategy pursued by the *archontes*, we have to look first at the known cases. Thus Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites, *megas stratopedarches* in 1449, had married his daughters to John Disypatos and Nicholas Goudeles, while his son-in-law was the learned Demetrios Laskaris Leontarios.⁵ Loukas Notaras appears as *gambros* (literally son-in-law) of the emperor, evidently because his wife belonged to the Palaiologos family, while his daughters Helen, Maria and Theodora were married respectively to George Gattilusi, son and successor of the lord of Ainos, the son of Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, and Manuel Palaiologos.⁶ Isaac Asan's son-in-law was George Philanthropenos, and his nephew, named Komnenos, was son-in-law of the *protostrator* Kantakouzenos.⁷

⁴ Sphrantzes, 122: "And he [Constantine Palaiologos] ordained thus, that 'I wish you to become one', and that he had Nicholas Goudeles in mind; and if the partnership is agreeable, we should become in-laws, through my son marrying his daughter". Ganchou, 'Iliario Doria', 75 n.18 suggests that Metochites was a brother of Disypatos' wife

⁵ Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I, 647: "my spouse passed away [1455], Kyra Euphrosyne Palaiologina Leontarina, daughter of Kyr Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites, the *megas stratopedarches* and governor (*kephale*) of Constantinople ... Demetrios Leontares, the son of the late John Laskaris Leontares the former governor of Selymbria, and grandson of the late Kyr Demetrios Leontares, who was governor of governors (κεφαλή τῶν κεφαλᾶδων)".

⁶ Various hypotheses have been put forward concerning the wife of Notaras. Formerly it was claimed that she was a daughter of John VII: S. Runciman, 'Lucas Notaras, γαμβρός βασιλέως', *Polychronion. Festschrift F. Dölger* (Heidelberg 1966), 447–9; more recently, Matschke, 'Personengeschichte', 804, has argued that she was descended from the Asans who were related to the Palaiologoi. What is certain is that Notaras' daughter went down in history as Anna Palaiologina: see Chryssa Maltezos, *Άννα Παλαιολογίνα Νοταρά, μια τραγική μορφή ανάμεσα στον βυζαντινό και τον νεοελληνικό κόσμο* (Venice 2004); this has the most recent bibliography on the marriage choices of the Notaras family.

⁷ The kinship ties of these persons are described by Sphrantzes, 46; according to Ganchou, 'Le mésazon', 246, Komnenos was *gambros* of the *protostrator* Manuel Kantakouzenos who appears in 1425. See also Th. Ganchou, 'A propos d'un cheval de race: un dynaste de Trébizonde en exil à Constantinople au début du XVe siècle', *Mare et litora. Essays Presented to Sergei P. Karpov for his 60th Birthday*,

Besides, the two *mesazontes*, George Philanthropenos and Andronikos Palaiologos Iagaris, appear to have become related in the course of time through the marriage of their children.⁸ We know too that Kyr Theodore Vatatzes, the ‘customs officer for fish’ (κομμερκιάριος τῶν ἰχθύων), occurs in Badoer’s account book as the *gambros* of a certain Demetrios Palaiologos.⁹ From the judicial decisions of the Patriarchate we can, to a certain degree, reconstruct the family relations that linked some of the inhabitants of Constantinople. For example, where the marriage choices of the aristocracy are concerned, there were the relationship between an aristocratic lady named Theodora with the emperor’s *oikeios* Kyr John Sophianos, who was her *gambros* and one of the entrepreneurs known to us,¹⁰ and that of Anna Asanina Palaiologina with George Goudeles.¹¹ Finally, at the court of John VIII we find a certain Laskaris Mamalis, sent as the emperor’s envoy bearing gifts to the sultan at Gallipoli.¹²

Although the cases of families that we know about are not numerous, they make it reasonable to suppose that the old aristocratic lineages sought through marriage alliances to incorporate new families, which in turn obtained, through these relationships, the necessary social legitimization. The closed circle of these intermarriages was the *archontes*’ own choice, and it finds circumstantial expression in Sphrantzes’ comment on the proposed marriage of Constantine Palaiologos to the daughter of the Venetian Francesco Foscari: “Who of the lords and ladies of the City would accept as lady and mistress the daughter of a Venetian (distinguished and a Doge maybe, but only temporarily) and his *gambroi* as fellow *gambroi* of the emperor, or his sons as the emperor’s brothers-in-law?”¹³ Sphrantzes’ comment

ed. R. Shukurov, (Moscow 2009), 553–574

⁸ Ganchou, ‘Sur quelques erreurs’, 66–7.

⁹ Th. Ganchou, ‘Giacomo et kyr Théodoros Batatzès *chomercier di pesi* à Constantinople (flor. 1401–1409)’, *REB* 61 (2003), 79.

¹⁰ MM II, 437.

¹¹ MM II, 361–6.

¹² Syropoulos, 544.

¹³ Sphrantzes, 138: τίς γὰρ τῶν τῆς Πόλεως ἀρχόντων ἢ ἀρχοντισσῶν κυρίαν καὶ δέσποιναν κατεδέξατο Βενετικῆς θυγατέρα (ἐνδόξου μὲν ἴσως καὶ δουκός,

also, I think, provides an answer to the question that arises when one looks at the families with which the Notaras family sought to ally themselves. Although an important economic factor in Pera, they had not formed kinship ties with the powerful Demerode and De Draperiis families that were active in the Genoese colony.¹⁴ By contrast, Loukas Notaras, both for himself and for his daughters, sought kinship with the Palaiologoi. This fact, combined with his later career, allows us to suppose that Notaras, precisely because he had political rather than business ambitions, aimed above all to become related to the imperial family. Even the marriage of his daughter Helen with Gattilusi followed the same logic and aimed at strengthening the emperor’s relations with the Gattilusi family, who governed Ainos under the suzerainty of John Palaiologos.¹⁵ The *archontes* formed a closed and numerically restricted group. Mention of the *archontopouloi* (‘pages’)¹⁶, who grew up at the imperial court, shows that the group secured its cohesion and perpetuated its strength by sending its younger members to serve and train in the emperor’s entourage. The *archontopouloi* went through an initiation, receiving a good education along with the princes of the blood,¹⁷ and, mainly, taking part early on in various diplomatic missions.¹⁸

ἀλλὰ προσκαίρω) ἢ τοὺς γαμβροὺς τοὺς ἄλλους αὐτοῦ ὡς συγγάμβρους ἢ τοὺς θεῖους ὡς γυναικαδελφοὺς τοῦ βασιλέως;

¹⁴ For a detailed study of these families, see M. Balard, ‘La société pérote aux XIV^e–XV^e siècles: autour des Demerode et des Draperio’, *Byzantine Constantinople*, 299–311.

¹⁵ Th. Ganchou, ‘Hélène Notara Gatelousiana d’Ainos et le *Sankt Peterburg Bibl. Publ. Gr.* 243’, *REB* 56 (1998), 152–3. Indeed, Ganchou claims (p. 152, n. 50) that the lord of Ainos Palamedes Gattilusi accepted Helen as a bride for his son George because there was no available Palaiologan bride from the imperial family. In any case, the Palaiologoi had already become related to the Gattilusi, since John VII had married Palamedes’ daughter.

¹⁶ MM II, 382: Michael Palaiologos, ‘from among the emperor’s *archontopouloi*’; see also the verses by John Eugenikos on the tomb of Isaac Asan (*PP*, I, 211): “Nurtured brilliantly in imperial halls/ He quickly proceeded to the highest fame”.

¹⁷ For Loukas Notaras’ placement and education at the imperial court as a youth, see Kiousopoulou, ‘Ψήγματα μιας βιογραφίας’, 164–5.

¹⁸ See Sphrantzes, 16: “[the emperor] sent to meet the infidel ... Demetrios Leontares, Isaac Asan and the *protostrator* Manuel Kantakouzenos with many *archontopouloi* and soldiers”.

The active presence in the political life of Constantinople of men from the old aristocratic families, like the Kantakouzenoi or the Philanthropenoi, is to be expected. Others too, such as Manuel Tarchaneiotes Boullotes, although from less powerful families, could trace their traditions back to the 14th century.¹⁹ It is consequently more interesting to follow the history of families like the Goudeles and the Notaras, in order to pinpoint the moment or the conditions in which families without aristocratic origins acquired political power.

In a previous chapter we referred to George Goudeles and his son John, who, in collaboration with the Genoese, imported grain to Constantinople under siege at an exorbitant price.²⁰ George Goudeles had appeared as a merchant around 1382. In 1390 he transported to Genoa, as we have seen, and sold a large quantity of grain that belonged to John VII, while in 1400, during his legal dispute with the Chiot family of Koreses, we encounter him with the title of the emperor's *oikeios*. In that same year he became involved in another legal dispute with Anna Asanina Palaiologina, whose husband appears, although not very clearly in the document, as his relative. In the years 1399–1400, when these judicial decisions of the Patriarchate were issued, Goudeles seems to have been an important factor in the economic scene. He bought and sold real estate in the city, he made loans to fellow citizens, and he kept the ecclesiastical tribunal busy either as a plaintiff or as a witness. Like other Byzantine businessmen, George Goudeles had become a *Januensis*, which gave him certain privileges and notably the protection of Genoa. Chortasmenos in one of his letters sings Goudeles' praises and calls him a true aristocrat,²¹ but that is as much as we know about his biography. Of George's descendants, we know his son John who had the title of *oikeios*, a 'Manoli Cutela' who figures as a textile merchant in Badoer's account

¹⁹ A Boullotes appears as a donor to the Lavra monastery, and a Manuel Boullotes turns up later as an intellectual and book collector. The latter had kinship ties with the Tarchaneiotes family, while a Demetrios Boullotes who is mentioned as an imperial *oikeios* in 1401 (MM II, 509, 513) had a wife from the Apokaukos family and relations with those of Gabras and Vatatzes: see V. Laurent, 'La profession de foi de Manuel Tarchaneiotes Boullotès au concile de Florence', *REB* 10 (1952), 63–4.

²⁰ See above, p. 20.

²¹ Chortasmenos, 157.

book, and a Nicholas Goudeles who during the Council of Florence sold the horses that he had brought from Russia to John VIII and his brother Demetrios Palaiologos.²² Finally, a *mesazon* and cousin of Manuel II was Demetrios Palaiologos Goudeles, whose relationship to the other members of the Goudeles family remains unclear.

The Notaras family, who came from Monemvasia, have been better studied.²³ George Notaras came to Constantinople in the middle of the 14th century and established himself there as a merchant of preserved fish. Rapidly extending his activity to the ports of the Black Sea, Chios and Crete, he developed close business connections with the Italians and especially with the Genoese of Pera. He entered the imperial court as interpreter to Andronikos IV, whom he followed to Selymbria. Both George and his son Nicholas Notaras, who began his career around 1386, were initially supporters of Andronikos IV and John VII, who were also backed by the Genoese. From 1391 onwards, however, Nicholas joined the entourage of Manuel II, at whose court he acted as interpreter and ambassador until his death in 1426. At the same time, Nicholas acquired Venetian and Genoese nationality, maintaining and extending, as we have already mentioned, his economic activities in Italy. His eldest son, John, had the title of *epi tes trapezes*, but was put to death by the Turks in 1411. His other son, Loukas, became the strongest political personality in 15th-century Constantinople. We shall have frequent occasion to comment on the political career of Loukas Notaras. Here we may just note that the families of the rich entrepreneurs were favoured by the dynastic quarrels of the last Palaiologoi, who wanted to use the Venetian and Genoese connections of these families to their advantage. It was exactly in this period and later that the Goudeles and Notaras mingled at the imperial court with the members of the old aristocratic families who, having lost their lands, were obliged to invest their remaining wealth in trade. This confirms what we know already from the studies of N. Oikonomides: the crucial moment for the appearance of the "newly rich" (νεωστὶ πλουτησάντων) on the political scene coincided with the Turkish occupation of the greater part of the Balkans and the restriction

²² Syropoulos, 296: "the Despot Kyr Demetrios bought the rest of Goudeles' horses".

²³ See the bibliography referred to above, p. 31 n. 13.

of Byzantine rule to Constantinople and its surrounding area. The emperor gave recognition to these ‘newly rich’, the economically powerful entrepreneurs; indeed, he actively sought their support by entrusting the richest of them with the management of state affairs, in parallel to the powers that were traditionally exercised by the members of the extended imperial family. It was clearly then, and in view of the Turkish danger, that the last Palaiologoi made the strategic choice of a systematic rapprochement with the West.

Within this general framework of imperial politics it is necessary for us to draw a more detailed picture of the *archontes* who participated in the court under Manuel II and John VIII Palaiologos.

Certainly, the circumstances of Manuel Palaiologos’ accession to the throne played a preponderant role in his choice of the people with whom he surrounded himself. We saw that he took on Notaras. He did the same with other followers of John VII, Manuel Bryennios Leontares, who became *kephale* of Constantinople, and Demetrios Chrysoloras.²⁴ His spiritual anxieties, besides, and the education he received from Kydones brought him close to people who became known for their anti-Palamite sentiments or even for their conversion to Catholicism. The *Interviews with Dead Men* of Mazaris, a satirical text of 1414–1415, comments on the situation prevailing at the court of Manuel II and, among other things, vehemently criticises the emperor’s learned uncle Constantine Asan, known for his attacks on Palamism,²⁵ and the *logariastes* of the court Michael Mouskaranos who had close relations with the Podestà of Pera. Some scholars, such as the editors of the text, have identified Mouskaranos with Demetrios Skaranos who was *logariastes*, had lived in Venice, and was Catholic,²⁶ although more

²⁴ Th. Ganchou, ‘Autour de Jean VII: luttes dynastiques, interventions étrangères et résistance orthodoxe à Byzance (1373–1409)’, *Coloniser au Moyen Âge*, ed. M. Balard – A. Ducellier (Paris 1995), 372.

²⁵ Mazaris’ *Journey to Hades, or Interviews with Dead Men about Certain Officials of the Imperial Court*, ed. J.N. Barry – M.J. Share – A. Smithies – L.G. Westerink (Buffalo 1975), 56.

²⁶ See too G.T. Dennis, *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus* (Washington 1977), lvii–lx. On Skaranos, see also Th. Ganchou, ‘Démétrios Kydonès, les frères Chrysobergès et la Crète (1397–1401)’, *Bisanzio, Venezia e il mondo franco-greco*

recent research has cast doubt on the identification.²⁷ But regardless of his identity, Mouskaranos, a person with a high position at court, appears to have had ties with the Genoese at the expense of his fellow citizens, which is why he became the object of severe criticism.²⁸

The same text, Mazaris’ *Interviews with Dead Men*, also shows that a basic characteristic of Manuel’s court was the lack of clear criteria for the choice of his ‘men.’ According to Mazaris, the emperor’s close entourage included both men of humble origin and aristocrats, Byzantines as well as Latins; above all, however, the court was inhabited by men of doubtful morality.²⁹ Mazaris’ criticism, though excessively sharp with regard to the ‘elasticity’ of the emperor’s criteria for choosing his courtiers, is, to a degree, well founded. Manuel’s court was formed at the time when the businessmen we have mentioned burst upon the political scene. Before that, the same businessmen had supported John VII, whose pro-Turkish policy had served the interests of Genoa in the region.³⁰ Even though the great social mobility that Mazaris satirises (one of his main heroes, the secretary Holobolos, was the son of a tavern keeper) is not evident from a survey of the various biographies, it is a fact that the new men, in terms of both background and mentality, who appeared on the political scene were the more vulnerable to criticism.

The dividing lines seem clearer at the court of John VIII Palaiologos. His openly pro-Latin policy justified the retention of men with

(*XII–XV secolo*), ed. Chryssa Maltezou – P. Schreiner (Venice 2002), 477f.

²⁷ See Ganchou, *op. cit.*, p. 483 n. 130, and Jacoby, ‘Byzantine Traders’, 258 n.44.

²⁸ Mazaris, 47: “You mean that mangy creature Misael Mouskaranos, that backbiting, thievish, despicable, underhanded bugger and pickpocket, who thinks he knows everything past, present and future, but apart from a lot of impudence he’s just nothing at all – that phony astrologer, who can’t speak Greek properly and has papist leanings, – a man who is circumcised.”

²⁹ Mazaris, 21.

³⁰ Ganchou, ‘Autour de Jean VII’, 374–5; the most characteristic case is, I think, that of Manuel Bryennios Leontares. Leontares was the governor of Selymbria and he had followed John VII to Constantinople, where he appears to have speculated on the grain market in collaboration with the authorities in Pera; in 1409, we find him at Manuel’s side and shortly afterwards he appears as *kephale* of the City.

contacts to the West, like Loukas Notaras and the Disypatos brothers. What is worth noting, however, is that the descendants of some of the old supporters of John VII who had tied their interests to Genoa and who, in line with its policies, had not opposed the Turks at that time, became after 1430 and during the reign of John VIII fanatical proponents of rapprochement with the West. We should also observe that, during John's reign, with the exception of Notaras, active businessmen are not to be found on the internal political scene. Whereas, for example, Manuel had given the title of *oikeios* to Sophianos or Argyropoulos, and despite the fact that they or their immediate descendants continued to be active businessmen, as is apparent from Badoer's account book, none of them appears further with political responsibilities. One way or another, John's court was perhaps a little smaller in relation to that of Manuel, at least according to the picture given by the available sources. Since that picture is likely not to be completely accurate (for John's reign we lack the acts of the patriarchal tribunal in which, as we have seen, most of Manuel's *oikeioi* are mentioned), it is probable that we do not know all the people at John's court. However, to return to the entrepreneurs, it is more likely that some of them were no longer personally interested in dignities, as opposed to others, like Loukas Notaras, who sought them both for himself and for his children. The example of the Notaras family shows, especially, that within such families there was a division of labour among their members.³¹ At the same time that Loukas was developing his political activity, we encounter in the account book of Badoer a Demetrios Notaras with a wide span of commercial business. Thus the trajectory that these rich 'middle class' families followed in their relations can, in my opinion, be drawn in general lines as follows: sometime around the end of the 14th century and in the circumstances we remarked on above, some 'founding father' gained access to the court. His immediate offspring, developing kinship ties with aristocratic families by means of marriage alliances, consolidated their own family's political strength, that is its position at court. At the same time, they divided up the family's

³¹ Matschke, 'Personengeschichte', 801–2; K.-P. Matschke – F. Tinnefeld, *Die Gesellschaft im späten Byzanz: Gruppen, Strukturen und Lebensformen* (Köln – Weimar – Vienna 2001), 186ff.

respective fields of activity into business ventures on the one hand and the exercise of power on the other.

Study of the political personnel leads to the obvious conclusion that both Manuel and John chose the people who had given proof of their devotion and would support them against their opponents. Characteristic is the case of George Sphrantzes as he himself describes it in his *Chronicle*: his uncle was *tatas* of Manuel's sons³² and he himself became at the age of sixteen *kelliot* of Constantine. Growing up at court he gained the confidence of Manuel and his sons,³³ who, by his own account, used him in various missions and embassies, and granted him the title of *protovestiarites* (1432) in recognition of his devotion to them on each occasion.³⁴ Of course, Sphrantzes was and remained to the end a courtier who did not make policy, for all that he tries to present himself in his narrative as the adviser of Manuel and later of Constantine. In reality, however, it seems that his task was to execute imperial decisions. From this point of view, Sphrantzes is not representative of the individuals with whom the last Palaiologoi allied themselves. More typical in this respect is the example of a certain Kantakouzenos to whom Constantine had given the office of *protostrator* "because of their in-law relationship and because of his father".³⁵ The father of the *protostrator* was the *mesazon* Demetrios Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, member of a family that had declared clearly in favour of Church Union.³⁶

³² The duties of the *tatas* are not clear, although in all probability this was the person charged with looking after the emperor's children: see R. Guiland, 'Études sur l'histoire administrative de l'Empire byzantin. Sur quelques titres du Bas Empire byzantin: le mémorialiste, ἐπὶ τῶν ἀναμνήσεων, le myrtaite et le *tatas*', *JÖB* 16 (1967), 149–50.

³³ Manuel appointed George Sphrantzes executor of his will, John made him *protovestiarites*, and Constantine charged him with the task of finding him a wife. See Sphrantzes' own description of his appointment as the prince's *kelliot* (Sphrantzes, 12); see also how he describes Constantine's impatience to employ him on a mission to search for a spouse (*ibid.*, 116).

³⁴ Sphrantzes, 32: "for Sphrantzes, because he served me well and ministered to me in soul and body".

³⁵ Sphrantzes, 124: διὰ τὴν συγγένειαν τῆς συγγαμβρίας καὶ διὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα.

³⁶ Ganchou, 'Le *mésazon*', 267 n.63, 270–1.

If Manuel had to contend with his relatives in claiming the throne, John was confronted by the officials of the Patriarchate and all those who were opposed to Union for political reasons, mainly his brother Demetrios and the latter's supporters.³⁷ The final showdown in the struggle between the two brothers came with the siege of Constantinople that Demetrios undertook, unsuccessfully, in 1443, aided by the Turks and by his father-in-law Paul Asan, then *kephale* of the City. Manuel was obliged to ally with entrepreneurs, like Goudeles or Nicholas Notaras, while John allowed Loukas Notaras to become the leading factor in politics, bestowing the *mesastikion* on him. On the other hand, however, examining the transition from the court of one emperor to that of his successor, we can see that the circumstances of the period, both those that determined the relationship among the powers of the West, and the condition into which the state of Constantinople was falling, imposed a progressive radicalisation of the views and choices of the emperor. This also explains, I think, the presence at the Byzantine court of men who were well disposed to Catholicism or who had already become Catholics. On a personal level, their presence had probably influenced both emperors. But on a political level, these people gave the last Palaiologoi the freedom of movement they needed in order to distance themselves from the Patriarchate; a distancing that with the passage of time became more and more imperative for the success of the rapprochement with the West at which they aimed.

B. The social profile of the *archontes*

It is worth noting that in texts of the period the *archontes* are often regarded with mistrust. The caricature of the corrupt judge Katablattas comes from the pen of a man who could not accept the combination of low birth and arrogance that characterised the men of unknown, and certainly non-aristocratic origin who had acquired state dignities. John Argyropoulos, who in all probability wrote the invective against Katablattas, was himself from an aristocratic family of Thessaloniki; he became a priest in Hagia Sophia and was subsequently appointed

³⁷ I. Djurić, *Le crépuscule de Byzance* (Paris 1996), 338ff.

by the emperor to be the head of a school. From his other writings it is apparent that Argyropoulos shared many of the political views of the Palaiologoi. What he certainly could not bear, however, was the fact that Katablattas, even though he was not of noble background, held public office and behaved like an aristocrat, abusing his power. The worst thing was that this pervert of altogether reprehensible behaviour, had dared to accuse him, Argyropoulos, of atheism. Argyropoulos' quarrel with Katablattas, which we also comment on elsewhere, and the accusations they slung at each other, are surely a symptom of the troubled age in which they lived, just as another symptom is the judge's rapid social rise. Katablattas was the son of a low-ranking state official and the education he had received does not allow us to class him among the indigent, as his opponent would have us believe. However, what Argyropoulos mainly held against him was his quick and underhand social rise, thanks to which he even had access to the imperial court.³⁸ It was precisely these humble origins of men who stood extremely close to the emperor that constituted the basis of the sharp criticism voiced also, as we have seen, by the author of the *Interviews with Dead Men*.

Mazaris wrote his satire to be read out before "those present", who knew the people and the business of the Byzantine court and enjoyed hearing about the conspiracies, adulterous liaisons, deceptions, and manipulative relationships that characterised certain *archontes*.³⁹ It is difficult to evaluate the overall attitude of the author and his audience with regard to the court. On first reading, and given the fact that Mazaris ends up at the court of Mystras, one might take it as an attack by the aristocratic landowners of the Peloponnese against Manuel, with whose brother, Theodore, they had come into conflict. But it is not impossible that the author was someone close to the officials of the Patriarchate, displeased by Manuel's policy towards the Church, especially during the Synod of 1409. What is certain is that in his satire Mazaris speaks from the critical viewpoint of someone who had not profited from his loyal and correct behaviour

³⁸ Canivet-Oikonomides, 10–11.

³⁹ H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, II (München 1978), 155–7.

towards the emperor amid the orgy of immoral practices that were going on around him.⁴⁰

Given the difficulties we have in understanding its purpose, the *Interviews with Dead Men* is of value for the study of political personnel only – as we have pointed out already – insofar as it reflects the fluidity of the moral and social criteria that governed the composition of the Byzantine court. It is also interesting in the way it clearly expresses the internal hierarchy of political society at the time.

The text of Mazaris relates the ‘biography’ of Holobolos, the central character in the narrative. From a humble family background – his father was a tavern-keeper and his grandfather a hat-maker – Holobolos entered the court as the undersecretary of a certain Padiates and quickly gained the confidence of the emperor, who included him in his entourage when he travelled to Europe. He became rich and he would have succeeded in obtaining the title of *megas logothetes*, if, on returning from a mission, he had not got involved with a woman and neglected his duties because of her. His negligent conduct obliged Manuel to dismiss him and to replace him with Demetrios Angelos Kleidas Philommates, whose grandfather had performed valuable services for the emperor, in prison at the time.⁴¹ His comment about another member of the court would have fit him perfectly:⁴² The person characterised as νεήλυς is Padiates, who as rhetor and an imperial secretary belonged to the emperor’s inner circle. Apart from Holobolos and Padiates, comments are made on other high-ranking persons in the court hierarchy, though as secondary characters in the narrative. Among them, as we have seen, the emperor’s uncle Constantine Asan is the butt of ridicule for his philological worries, although more characteristic is the portrait that Mazaris takes pleasure in sketching of the high dignitary Michael Mouskaranos. Mouskaranos was the

⁴⁰ Mazaris 36–7, 40–41: by his own account Mazaris, in spite of all he had suffered, remained faithful to Manuel, while others, like Karantzes, Machetares and Tarchaneiotas, went over to John VII.

⁴¹ Mazaris, 20–1, 26–7.

⁴² Mazaris, 12–13: “because the Emperor, as was his custom with all new arrivals, put him straight to work”.

accountant (*logariastes*) of the court, he had offered his personal economic services to the emperor,⁴³ and he maintained close relations with the Genoese of Pera. He was two-faced and a sower of intrigues, but above all Latin-minded and an “enemy of the (Orthodox) Creed” (συμβολομάχος). He was “the one who sowed tares in the Great Church of God, he is the one who by his counsel and by a continuous stream of letters persuaded his son-in-law, the wretch Raoul Myrmex, to buy the pride of the Roman Empire, the island of Thasos”.⁴⁴ Michael Mouskaranos has the political and economic profile of the *archontes* that we have described above. He was a merchant who collaborated with the Genoese and a state official at the same time. Mouskaranos had wealth and power enough to make him disliked, and something else that provoked the harsh criticism of Mazaris and the readers of his satire: as *logariastes* of the court he controlled the *kommerkiarioi* and consequently was or could be considered responsible for their abuses of their authority.⁴⁵ Moreover, the tax farmers came not only from the circle of the rich merchants of Constantinople, but also from the Genoese of Pera, a fact that justifies Mazaris’ criticism of the injustices that Mouskaranos committed by collaborating with the Genoese at the expense of his fellow citizens. Besides, even if he is not identical with Skaranos, his particular combination of roles and the censure of his moral corruption would have reminded Mazaris’ audience of the real-life person of Skaranos who, like Constantine Asan, had become involved in the theological discussions of the time, taking a clearly anti-Palamite position.

⁴³ Mazaris, 46–7: “the fellow who came from Babylon to the Golden Gate that time and who had to stand trial together with that senile Peloponnesian, the late Sophianos the softhead, over that matter of the imperial timber that was shipped to Alexandria”. For the emperor’s wood exports to Egypt, with reference to this information from Mazaris, see Jacoby, ‘Byzantine Traders’, 258–60.

⁴⁴ Mazaris, 48–9.

⁴⁵ Another person who receives comment is ‘Kakoalexios’ (Mazaris, 22–3, 42–3, 44–5). Mazaris describes him as “an able tax-collector, experienced in government business, and a thief and skinflint besides”, pointing out that, apart from his other arbitrary acts, he did not hesitate to steal the house of his uncle, Holobolos. It is interesting that Mazaris’ Kakoalexios can be identified with Alexios Antiochos, who corresponded with Manuel II and had accompanied the emperor on his journey to the West: see in this connection Marina Loukaki, ‘Contribution à l’étude de la famille Antiochos’, *REB* 50 (1992), 203–4.

Mazaris and his sympathisers who questioned the legitimacy of parasitic courtiers from untraditional backgrounds find an unwitting echo in a letter by Manuel Kalekas to a friend whose identity is unknown to us. The friend had been taken on by Manuel Palaiologos to receive people wanting to see the emperor, and to write evaluations of those who should be admitted for audience. Kalekas recognises that his friend had a big workload and he emphasises that no-one could accuse him of idleness or being paid for nothing, in the way that courtiers were normally accused.⁴⁶

Another intellectual, Chortasmenos, also speaks with contempt of certain *archontes* who lived in the palace, had fine houses, and went about on horseback accompanied by an armed guard, terrorising and threatening all those they met on their way.⁴⁷ Chortasmenos, who belonged to the ‘orthodox party’, lived in close contact with the powerful men of the time: he sent them congratulatory letters, he was teacher to their children, and received their gifts with all the deference that their high rank required.⁴⁸ From his letters it emerges that he was ill-disposed towards those arrogant *archontes* who, having only the favour of Fortune to their credit, made extravagant promises and threatened their enemies. His negative attitude towards certain rich *archontes* is all the more obvious when we contrast it with the praise that he bestows on Goudeles for his charity,⁴⁹ or the epigrams that he composed on the magnificent house of Theodore Kantakouzenos.⁵⁰ It is clear that Chortasmenos is generally not bothered by the *archontes*;

⁴⁶ Kalekas, 193–4.

⁴⁷ Chortasmenos, 174.

⁴⁸ Chortasmenos, 226: letter to “the most illustrious of *archontes*”, Bryennios Leontares, *kephale* of Constantinople. Chortasmenos asserts respectfully that he is “using, not abusing, the friendship of the powerful”.

⁴⁹ Chortasmenos, 175: letter to Manuel Tarchaneiotos Boullotes, thanking him for the amount of the gift he had sent, but also adding, “don’t hesitate to keep sending nuts, whenever you can”.

⁵⁰ Chortasmenos, 194; see also 165–6, where, replying to criticism from the *megas chartophylax* Michael Balsamon, the author emphasises that Kantakouzenos had asked for the epigrams. According to Chortasmenos, moreover, Kantakouzenos supervised the building of his house in person, “since [the builders] were not even allowed to whitewash the walls by themselves without his approval”.

he is a faithful subject of the emperor and absolutely law-abiding with respect to men in power. He is bothered, however, by those who he thinks do not have the right to behave like *archontes*, characterising their behaviour as arrogant.

At all events, many authors agree in criticising the great fortunes that the *archontes* had amassed. Symeon of Thessaloniki denounces their excessive wealth,⁵¹ and Scholarios in a letter to Constantine Palaiologos says that he considers it necessary that the “haves”, as he calls them, should open “their sacks and chests’ for their country’s sake and their own good”.⁵² Eyewitnesses of the Conquest comment on the amount of treasure that the Turkish soldiers found in certain aristocratic houses, and some of them blame the rich inhabitants of Constantinople because they did not contribute to the costs of defence during the siege.⁵³ It is certain that in a city that faced a serious threat of conquest, and whose inhabitants were suffering from the consequences of repeated sieges, the display of wealth only emphasised all the more the existing social inequality. It is also certain that, given the acute religious crisis that existed at the time, the opponents of the *archontes* would call attention to their moral failings at every opportunity, and especially the sin of arrogance resulting from excessive riches. And, finally, it is only to be expected that some men of the church, especially, would make the most of the suspicion and indeed hostility of Christian doctrine with regard to money and the display of wealth.

Yet I wonder whether, aside from their commonplace and predictable attitude of criticism, what our authors are commenting on essentially was not the unfamiliarity of the reality they observed. Surely, as Oikonomides observed,⁵⁴ the 15th-century *archontes* had adopted the economic behaviour of the Italian merchants, who invested mainly in business in pursuit of profit, and were not interested in merely

⁵¹ *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon, Archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17 to 1429)*, ed. D. Balfour (Vienna 1979), 47

⁵² *PP*, II, 96.

⁵³ Necipoğlu, ‘Social and Economic Conditions in Constantinople’, 79–82.

⁵⁴ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 130–1.

performing works of benefaction that would enhance their social reputation – a lack of interest that had alienated certain Byzantine intellectuals even in Makrembolites' day. We have seen that what was often held against them in the 15th century was that they built three-storey houses and did not repair the city walls (Joseph Bryennios⁵⁵), or that they amassed wealth by oppressing the poor (Symeon of Thessaloniki⁵⁶). However, exhibitionist behaviour as a means of social assertion is a feature of the ruling classes in all pre-capitalist societies. From this point of view, the *archontes* of the 15th century did not deviate from the norm, nor from the traditions of the Byzantine aristocracy. On the contrary, we can see that they tended to imitate the aristocrats. Goudeles, for example, built a hospice/hospital and Chortasmenos regards this action as truly aristocratic. Nor did their habit of building themselves fine houses constitute an innovation.

Therefore, the display of wealth in itself was not the main reason for the criticism to which they were subjected; the criticism was provoked by the fact that precisely because of their wealth, the *archontes* had adopted a way of life, which characterised all the people in politics at all levels, and abolished the traditional social distinctions.⁵⁷ Argyropoulos' comments on Katablattas' appearance on the streets of Constantinople in an expensive aristocratic attire that was suited neither to his position nor to his official everyday duties, are an eloquent expression of the failure to explain the overturning of hitherto familiar social distinctions. Moreover, we can imagine

⁵⁵ Ed. Tomadakis, 249: "so that if just ten of you rich *archontes*, starting thirty years ago, had put as much care and expense into the city walls as into building themselves three-storey houses, no part of the city [perimeter] would not be renovated today".

⁵⁶ Symeon, ed. Balfour, 47: "and *archontes* waste money, but pile it up ... shamelessly perpetrating all kinds of unjust deeds, while the poor, imitating their rulers, take arms against each other and live rapaciously and greedily".

⁵⁷ Argyropoulos (ed. Canivet–Oikonomides, 53) comments on the social rise of Katablattas as follows: "how else did you acquire horses and slaves and fine tapestries, and on top of this your daily household extravagances and all kinds of luxuries?" See too Mazaris, 28–9: See, finally, Syropoulos' repugnance when he says that even the clothiers and the doctors of the court were consulted on the Union, and responded positively.

the spiritual anxieties of the *archontes*: Kalekas corresponded with many dignitaries, with whom he seems to have agreed in their criticism of the Patriarchal officials,⁵⁸ while Mazaris makes fun of the court of Manuel II, where the *archontes* gathered to hear "that highborn and highly stupid and vulgar man" Asan read his texts.⁵⁹ Chortasmenos remarks acidly that in Manuel's philological circle rhetorical eloquence was rewarded with a dignity.⁶⁰ We may suppose that similar spiritual preoccupations, unsupervised by the Church or at least unusual for the city's conservative circles, affected those who frequented the literary salon of Loukas Notaras, who regretted the deficiencies of his own education,⁶¹ yet gathered intellectuals in his house and discussed with them the great theological issues of the day.⁶² If the case of Loukas Notaras is, as I believe, representative of the 15th-century Constantinopolitan élite, it becomes clear that the blurring of the strict class distinctions, combined with the blurring of traditional group identities, was, in the final analysis, the most significant transformation that the intellectuals had difficulty in confronting when they criticised the *archontes*' way of life.

Besides, in that criticism, we can detect yet another contradiction in the society under discussion, that is the contradiction between the conspicuous exhibitionism of the *archontes*, expressed in their luxurious lifestyle, and the expectation of the fall of Constantinople.

⁵⁸ For example, he corresponded with an *oikeios* of Manuel II who later became abbot of his own monastery, and with a dignitary whose brother was his friend.

⁵⁹ Mazaris, 56–7: "Just as in the imperial palace I never missed an opportunity to share your writings with His Majesty and the others".

⁶⁰ Chortasmenos, 35–7

⁶¹ *PP* II, 194.

⁶² As recognised in a letter from Scholarios: "You sought adornment from learning, and this inherent in the greatness of your nature. In a short time, you collected the best, poring over books or paying attention to what was being read by those other people, whom either respect for your virtue or their own necessity brought together in your house". John Argyropoulos also praises Notaras for his culture: "... not least your enthusiasm for learning, which you consider to be the most precious thing that we possess. Sometimes you take delight in what is written in history books, at other times you expound philosophy correctly, like someone trained in the Academy and expert in the weaving of words."

Why did the *archontes* invest a part of their wealth in a city that was continually under threat, when they were able to relocate?⁶³ In trying to understand this attitude, I cannot help thinking that these men needed to assert their power continually and in every possible way, precisely because they did not feel secure. This also explains their marriage strategy: the tightening of the kinship bonds that united the families of the *archontes* both with each other and with the Palaiologos family was not due to their superior attitude with regard to the Venetians, as Sphrantzes implies, but rather constituted a form of self-defence for the *archontes* of Constantinople in politically and economically unstable conditions.⁶⁴

A similar contradiction can also be discerned, I believe, in the fact that the *archontes* sought to have relations with the emperor, independently of their economic strength. Again the case of the *mesazon* Loukas Notaras is indicative. He was one of the richest, if not the richest, man in Constantinople, thanks to the fortune that his father had amassed through his business activity, even if such activity did not particularly interest him.⁶⁵ Two years before the Fall, Notaras negotiated with Constantine Palaiologos over the dignities that he wanted to be given to his sons, coming into conflict over this with Sphrantzes, who was claiming some high dignity for himself.⁶⁶ In the middle of the previous century, Demetrios Kydones, in a speech to John V, listed the benefits of a state dignitary: he acquired land and houses, lent money at interest to merchants, received gifts from petitioners to present their requests to the

⁶³ On those who abandoned Constantinople, see Necipoğlu, 'Constantinopolitan Merchants', 261.

⁶⁴ See, characteristically, the suspicious attitude of Constantine, as portrayed by Sphrantzes, with regard to the *archontes* when he was looking for a wife: "Who can I rely on? On the monks? They are inexperienced in such matters. On the *archontes*? Who can I find who is disinterested and does not have some particular agenda and will not say anything to the others?"

⁶⁵ Ganchou, 'Le rachat', 162–5, argues that Notaras simply made money in order to guard against the coming fall.

⁶⁶ Sphrantzes, 128: Constantine Palaiologos is represented as saying, "since he [Notaras] asked for us to honour his little lambs, he is asking us to make the first one *mezas logothetes* and the second one *mezas kontostaulos*".

emperor; he distributed posts, thus gaining personal influence, and allowed his relatives to have access to public wealth.⁶⁷ In the 15th century a state dignitary would indeed have had at least the same benefits, if only for a short time, except for the land which he would have found it difficult to obtain outside Constantinople; he would certainly have had money and authority.⁶⁸ It was exactly authority and money that Scholarios was after, when he tried in the 1430s to obtain a position at court.⁶⁹

Yet the Byzantine state now faced the danger of extinction and, as time passed, hopes faded that the Turks would be driven away. So it was as the Fall loomed that various *archontes*, Notaras among them, continued to seek dignities. This was surely not just out of vanity or in order to secure economic advantages from their role as intermediaries between the emperor and the Italians. I suggest

⁶⁷ Ed. R.-J. Loenertz, *Démétrius Cydonès, Correspondance*, I (Rome, Vatican 1956), 21, 22–6.

⁶⁸ See for example what Kalekas, 179, writes to his friend Melidones, praising him for his position close to the emperor, a position that gives him authority and increases his allowance (στρηρέσιον). Cf. Mazaris, 36–7: "You would have plenty of money, fame, honor and health, and you would have performed important public services". Elsewhere (ibid., 10–12, 22–5, 66) Mazaris insinuates that the issuing of chrysobulls and prostigmata was a lucrative activity at court.

⁶⁹ Blanchet, *Georges Gennadios Scholarios*, 300–310, with commentary on Scholarios' letters to the Despot Theodore (*Oeuvres complètes*, IV, 418–9). Scholarios makes known his decision to leave Constantinople since he is unable to find opportunities worthy of his abilities. He concludes as follows: "Why should I have had the trouble of moving to another place, when I could have been happy at home? But since there was no change of decision, and the ruler did not grant me a dignity, while I refused to remain and did not accept his judgment concerning me, the end of my journey is in God's hands". Moreover, in his letter of 1438 to Alexios Laskaris, Scholarios notes: "The emperor was displeased at the news of my departure, and said it was small-minded of me, having lived for so long with hopes of him and stayed on here the homeland for his sake, to give up everything out of laziness now when my hopes were going to be realised. So it seems that you have decided to write and advise me to stay because my hopes are on the point of coming to pass, and not to seek a better fortune far off, when it is possible to receive it close at hand." Cf. however, Scholarios' nostalgia on recalling the time when he served as a judge: "Ah, the favour and honour that everyone gave me! The pleasure with which they received me, considering it a sad day whenever I was absent from the Palace ...!"

that certain *archontes* invested in state offices mainly with their eye on the period after the Fall. The historians mention the sultan approaching Notaras with a view to using him in the administration of his state.⁷⁰ According to one later version, the *mesazon* himself offered Mehmet “a great treasure that he had hidden, with precious stones and pearls and other prizes befitting royalty”. Then the sultan, reproaching him for not having placed his wealth at the disposal of his emperor and his fatherland, and calling him a “devious schemer”, ordered him to be put to death.⁷¹ Aside from Notaras’ personal motives, this version no doubt echoes the prevailing atmosphere in Constantinople and the attitudes of both the *archontes* and the sultan. In any case, it seems that Notaras and other Byzantine *archontes* were put to death because of the pressure put on the sultan by Turkish dignitaries who feared that they might find themselves in an inferior position.⁷² Indications like these support my hypothesis concerning the political behaviour of the *archontes*: the *archontes* were trying to ensure their social power by keeping their place in the machinery of government, as long as it continued to exist, and in the same way they looked forward to being taken on by the sultan. Thus, the dignities they held at the imperial court were to be their guarantee of survival when the Turks took power.

When due allowance is made for changing circumstances, the 15th-century *archontes* made the same political choices as the *mesoi* of the mid-14th century, who, while siding with John V against John Kantakouzenos, never challenged the existing political

⁷⁰ Doukas, XL.3; Chalkokondyles, Book VIII, p. 165: “the Sultan for a while honoured and was close to Notaras, the chief minister of the king of the Hellenes; Kritoboulos I.73, §8: “he envisaged establishing Notaras as governor of the city in charge of its resettlement, having previously consulted him on this matter”.

⁷¹ George Phrantzes, *Chronikon*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1838), 291–3: θησαυρὸν πολλὸν ὃν εἶχε κεκρυμμένον, καὶ λίθους καὶ μαργάρους καὶ ἕτερα λάφουρα ἄξια βασιλεῦσιν. Similar exchanges are hinted at by Leonardo of Chios, 39.

⁷² Zachariadou, ‘Τα λόγια’, 144–5. Zachariadou (ibid., 136, 145) puts forward the hypothesis that Notaras was executed on account of his relations with the powerful Candarli family, from which several Turkish dignitaries originated. Notaras himself in a letter to Scholarios mentions “the letters written by me to the Turkish officials” (PP II, 199).

system. I have suggested elsewhere, on the basis of the biography of Loukas Notaras,⁷³ that the *archontes* like him who rose from the ranks of the *mesoi* were primarily interested in consolidating their relationship with the emperor, and from this point of view maintained the political behaviour of the Byzantine aristocracy. Thus it is said that many, when they mounted the walls to defend their city under siege, appealed to their honour, their family, and their loyalty to the emperor.

With all the contradictions that characterised the behaviour of the Constantinopolitan élite, the only innovation that they introduced, in the end, was their distancing of the state from the Church; they supported Union precisely because, as we have seen, the Church’s interests did not coincide with their own. However, even here they moved very cautiously. The stance of Loukas Notaras is again a good example, in his role as intermediary between Unionists and Anti-Unionists. In contrast to other scholars who claim that Notaras went over to the Anti-Unionist side, I believe that the existing sources, and especially his correspondence with Eugenikos and Scholarios, are mainly evidence of his efforts to calm things down and do not reveal his personal convictions.⁷⁴ At one point Scholarios condemns his conciliating behaviour when he writes to him angrily, telling him finally to stop “those rotten compromises”, accusing him of siding with the Latinisers.⁷⁵ However, I think that the dilemma between the Turkish turban and the Latin mitre was never posed for Notaras and his kind in religious terms.⁷⁶ To be more precise, the religious dimension of the question was not a criterion for their political behaviour. The opinion has been expressed that the *mezas doux* arrived at the formula recorded by Doukas, when he realised the unwillingness of the Westerners to help Constantinople and decided that it was necessary to follow the

⁷³ Kiousopoulou, ‘Ψήγματα μιας βιογραφίας’, 175.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 169–71.

⁷⁵ *Oeuvres complètes*, III, 150–1.

⁷⁶ According to Doukas, Notaras is said to have exclaimed on the eve of the Fall, “it is better to see the Turkish turban ruling in the City than the Latin mitre”.

certain and inevitable course of events.⁷⁷ Even if this was so, at least in the last phase before the Fall, the overall stance of Notaras with regard to the Anti-Unionists reflects his anxiety that a clear break with the Church would upset the existing balance that ensured the political and social ascendancy of him and those like him.

2. State and Administration

A. Dignities and titles

The *archontes* held dignities and formed the emperor's court, most of them having some personal or kin relationship with him, as emerges from the names that are known to us. Sometimes they are qualified as the emperor's *oikeios*, cousin or co-father-in-law, either to confirm their membership of the group, or as a justification of their rank or their diplomatic appointment. Often they are simply called senators.

In comparison with the *offikia* listed by Pseudo-Kodinos (mid 14th century), those that appear in the 15th century are few in number. The reality of the empire's territorial contraction might perhaps explain the complete disappearance of most dignities, as well as the concentration of all functions in the hands of the few people who formed the political personnel, regardless of their office. It might also explain to a degree the change in the duties attached to the titles. The needs of the court, besides, are also clearly restricted, since the court dignities that continued to exist were either purely honorific titles or they were attached to the ceremonial functions of the imperial institution. Yet even where the offices related to the operation of the state are concerned, it is not known how many of them actually corresponded to real services. Sphrantzes refers only to the duties of the constable (κοντόσταυλος). Speaking of the dignity that one of his sons would receive, Notaras proposes that of constable, head of the *rogatores*, since he (presumably Loukas Notaras) was already head of the mercenaries. With the exception of the dignities of *megas domestikos* and *megas doux*, which perhaps still corresponded to the chief commands of the army and the navy respectively, all the other offices mentioned seem to have had a purely honorific character. However, their very existence, albeit only as

⁷⁷ Matschke, 'Personengeschichte', 812.

honorifics, is indicative of their importance for what was left of the Byzantine state in the 15th century.

On the basis of the foregoing observations, and bearing in mind the generally honorific character of the *offikia* referred to in the sources, we may group them in three categories as follows: first, dignities connected with the functioning of the state; secondly, dignities associated with the functioning of the imperial institution or with court ceremonial; finally, dignities having to do with personal services to the emperor. To the first group we would assign the *mesazon*, the grand stratopedarch (*megas stratopedarches*), the grand logothete (*megas logothetes*), the grand domestic (*megas domestikos*), the grand duke (*megas doux*), the grand constable (*megas kontostaulos*), the interpreter (*diermeneutes*), and the logariastes of the court (*logariastes tes aules*); the same group would include the *apokrissarioi*, that is those sent as ambassadors. To the second group belonged the *protostrator* (who according to Pseudo-Kodinos carried the emperor's sword in the grand domestic's absence), the *protovestiarites* (the master of ceremonies), the grand *primmikerios* (who handed the emperor his staff),¹ the grand hetaireiarch (*megas hetaireiarches*), and the *palatophylax*. The third group would include the *epi tou kanikleiou*, the *protovestiarios*, the *epi tes trapezes*, the *keliotes*, the *grammatikoi*, the *roucharioi*, the doctors and the *rabdouchoi*.

The only explicit reference to the hierarchical ranking of some of the aforementioned *offikia* is made by Sphrantzes.² As we have already mentioned, he had a discussion with the emperor regarding the dignity he would receive. In connection with this discussion he makes mention of some dignities and their order in the hierarchy. The order is almost the same as we find in Pseudo-Kodinos:³ (1) *megas*

¹ J. Verpeaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos. Traité des offices* (Paris 1966).

² Sphrantzes, 122.

³ Verpeaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos*, 133 ff, especially pp. 136–9. In this list, we see that the *megas logothetes* came after the *megas kontostaulos* and the *megas doux* after the *protovestiarios* and before the *protostrator*. Missing from the list in Sphrantzes are the dignities of Caesar and *panhypersebastos* and Caesar, which in Pseudo-Kodinos came before and after the *megas domestikos* respectively.

domestikos, (2) *megas doux*, (3) *protostrator*, (4) *megas logothetes*, (5) *megas stratopedarches*, (6) *megas primikerios*, (7) *megas kontostaulos*.

If we study the list of the people we have drawn up in relation to the dignities they held,⁴ we notice immediately that a large number of people appear without any particular title; as a rule, these persons belonged to the *oikeioi*, independently of their social origins and the duties they performed. It is clear that the designation of *oikeios* validated a person's political relationship with the emperor and consequently whatever political influence or function he exercised. Interestingly, though, there are *oikeioi* of the emperor who appear in no particular political capacity during the period under discussion. We note as indicative the cases of Sophianos, Mamalis and Argyropoulos, who engaged in commercial activities and are mentioned as *oikeioi* of John VII or Manuel II.

Secondly, we observe that of all the persons included in the list, those who hold a particular dignity, apart from the office of *mesazon*, belong in one way or another to the family of the Palaiologoi: Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, Mark Palaiologos Iagaris, Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites. Despite the fact that their share in power was their privileged birthright, it is noteworthy that they also held high ranks in the hierarchy, a fact which does not seem to be merely coincidental. On the contrary, it seems probable that in this way the last Palaiologoi sought to affirm their leadership position by relying, as always, on their wider family, while at the same time they attempted to maintain a certain balance between men who had rights to the exercise of power through their lineage and men who had gained those rights by their service.

The criteria on the basis of which dignities were awarded become clearer from the discussion, to which we have already referred, between Sphrantzes and Constantine XI Palaiologos, in relation to the title of *megas logothetes*, which the former would receive as a reward for the services he had offered. While Constantine is cited as having given the dignity of *protostrator* to a Kantakouzenos, the son of the

⁴ See the list in the Appendix to this volume, p. 177–181.

mesazon Demetrios Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, “at the request of the Despot his brother, on account of their relationship by marriage and on account of his father”, he was concerned, at the same time, in case he should offend one of his dignitaries, and notably Notaras, if he gave the same or a higher dignity to some other person.⁵ The fact that the emperor finally, citing “many things to do with the time and the *archontes* themselves”, proposed that Sphrantzes should have the office of *mezas logothetes* on paper only and should not appear with it “on feast-day parade”,⁶ confirms the observation that high-ranking dignities were not given to individuals outside the imperial family. It should also be noted that the emperors were concerned to maintain a basic ceremonial protocol,⁷ for example, in the giving of garments to people in their confidential service.⁸ By the same logic, it is probable that they found it in their interest to preserve certain offices that would allow them, as leaders, to manage the distribution of political strength, at least on a symbolic level, and on the other hand to legitimise the power that certain individuals already had in reality. From this point of view it is interesting that Constantine Palaiologos, although he tried, it seems, to maintain an equilibrium in his court, wanted at the same time to have close to him men he could trust, regardless of the titles they held.⁹ It was according to

⁵ Sphrantzes, 124: ζητήσῃ τοῦ δεσπότη τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ [του], διὰ τὴν συγγενεῖαν τῆς συγγαμβρίας καὶ διὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα. See Ganchou, ‘Le *mesazon*’, 271, for commentary and the identification of the people mentioned.

⁶ Sphrantzes, 128: εἰς παράστασιν ἑορτῆς.

⁷ Syropoulos, 324: “Philanthropenos stood near [the throne] holding the imperial sword according to custom”.

⁸ Sphrantzes, 28: “the holy emperor gave orders to his clothier, ‘Give Sphrantzes the caftan of lead-grey damask with embossed embroidery, and let him have the coffer that he asked me for’”. See also Mazaris, 10–11: “Where are those resplendent robes of white silk which his majesty just recently gave you, and which, as you strutted around in them, made you look like a quaestor’s son?” Manuel II had earlier recognised Sphrantzes’ services: “for this Sphrantzes, because he served me well and looked after me in both spiritual and bodily matters”.

⁹ Sphrantzes, 120, where Constantine is reported as saying that when Notaras gave up the office of *mesazon*, “he may have the first place in the council and the senate, and an income in some other form, since I need to create two officials, like my brother, but not *mesazontes*, to be with me from the start of the day until late at night, for me to do my work, which is what happened”.

the same logic of the emperor’s need to control the distribution of dignities himself, that John VIII named two Florentine magistrates ‘counts palatine’, in order to thank the Florentines for their hospitality during the Council and to demonstrate his imperial status.¹⁰ For the purposes of the present analysis, the low number of dignities is perhaps not of great importance, especially when we remember that they corresponded mainly to honorific titles, bestowed on members of the imperial family, rather than to political functions. It is more important to examine how power was exercised and political decisions were taken.

The most important political function throughout the 15th century was performed by the *mesazon*.¹¹ His position was not officially constituted, but his power at the imperial court often proved substantial. We know the individuals who acted as *mesazontes*: they were Demetrios Palaiologos Goudeles, Hilarion Doria, Demetrios Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, Loukas Notaras, Andronikos Palaiologos Iagaris, George Philanthropenos. The first two served at the court of Manuel II, to whom they were related: Goudeles is referred to as his cousin and Doria was his son-in-law as the husband of his illegitimate daughter¹². Of the others, Kantakouzenos and Notaras shared the office of *mesazon* for a long time, while Iagaris and Philanthropenos were appointed to replace them by John VIII when he was in Italy. The way in which their names are quoted in the sources shows that the *mesastikion* had its own internal hierarchy, so that there were a first and second *mesazon*. The names of each pair of *mesazontes* allow us to suppose that, in this case as well, there was an attempt to maintain a balance between the representatives of the old aristocratic families and the representatives of the new Constantinopolitan élite.

¹⁰ *PP* III, 345–8, 349–52. John gave the title of ‘count palatine’ and the privilege of bearing “my majesty’s emblem on his banner” to the Florentines Giacomo Giovanni Paolo De Morelli and Michele Fedini. See the comments of N. Oikonomides, ‘The Byzantine Overlord of Genoese Possessions in Romania’, *Porphyrogenita. Essays on the History of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, ed. Ch. Dendrinos et al. (London 2003), 236–7.

¹¹ Doukas, XXII.10: “whom they [the Turks] call vizir and pasha and the Romans call *patrikios* and *mesazon*”.

¹² Ganchou, “Ilario Doria”, 84 ff, maintains that Doria was married to Manuel’s sister.

Manuel II granted the office of *mesazon* for life,¹³ a fact that is surely connected with the importance he attached to the organisation of the state. Although their duties are never explicitly revealed, precisely because they were never officially defined, the *mesazontes* handled all important affairs. The appointment of other individuals to act as *mesazontes* for the duration of the emperor's stay in Italy proves the weight they carried, but also their usefulness, in the conduct of state business. It is also revealing that John Eugenikos and Scholarios repeatedly addressed themselves to Notaras on the matter of Union,¹⁴ while Sphrantzes comments that the emperor was aware that Notaras was in a position to “move every stone”.¹⁵ In the period we are examining, it was the *mesazontes* who co-ordinated the emperor's discussions with the patriarch and his officials concerning the Byzantine participation in the councils of Basel and Florence. Moreover, the *mesazontes*, and especially Notaras, arranged the economic relations of the emperor with the Italian cities.¹⁶ Constantine Palaiologos gives an accurate definition of the *mesazon's* role when he declares that he cannot dismiss Notaras nor choose, as he would have wished, two other men to be at his side day and night: “and on account of his honour, there is no way we can take it away from him. But if he gives it up himself, he may have the first place in the council and the senate, and an income in some other form”.¹⁷ For the moment, leaving aside the matter of income, we should note as characteristic features of the *mesazon's* function Notaras' presidency of the council (*stasis*) and the senate (*boule*).

The two *mesazontes* were members of the council which, comprising also the dowager empress Helen Dragases, the emperor's wife, and the

¹³ Cf. also Constantine XI saying, in his conversation with Sphrantzes, that he could not dismiss Notaras (Sphrantzes, 120). See below, and also J. Verpeaux, ‘Contribution à l'étude de l'administration byzantine: ὁ μεσάζων’, *Bsl* 16 (1955), 270–96.

¹⁴ *PP* I, 137ff; II, 182ff.

¹⁵ Sphrantzes, 116.

¹⁶ See below, p.104.

¹⁷ Sphrantzes, 120: καὶ οὐδὲν τυχαίνει νὰ τοῦ τὸ ἐπάρωμεν διὰ τὴν τιμὴν του. Ἀμὴ νὰ τὸ ἀφήσῃ ἐκεῖνος, νὰ ἔχη δὲ καὶ τὸ πρῶτεϊον τῆς στάσεως καὶ τῆς βουλῆς καὶ πρόσδοδόν τινα δι' ἄλλου τρόπου.

mezas domestikos Andronikos Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, sat with John VIII and gave its opinion on all matters.¹⁸ Syropoulos observes that the emperor always took with him his secretary, Demetrios Angelos Philommates Kleidas, a man, as he says, who was not just one of the crowd.¹⁹ Correspondingly, after the deaths of the dowager empress and of the *mesazon* Kantakouzenos, around 1450, the council that attended on Constantine Palaiologos consisted of Notaras, Andronikos Kantakouzenos and John Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, a man in the confidence of the emperor, who when in the Peloponnese had appointed him governor of Patras and Corinth. Of interest, too, is the internal hierarchy that apparently prevailed in the council and reflected the ranking of each member in the hierarchy of the court. It has been observed, indeed, that Andronikos Kantakouzenos played in some sense the role of intermediary between the members of the senate and the *mesazontes*, just as, according to the same hypothesis, his relatives Theodore Kantakouzenos and Constantine Asan had had a similar role under Manuel II.²⁰ The names of the *mesazontes* and the background of each testify to their social power, which gave weight to the office they held.

This dimension is better reflected in the choice of ambassadors. A distinct diplomatic service never existed in Byzantium, and ambassadors were the personal representatives of the emperor at the time.²¹ Yet in the period under discussion, most known individuals – and known exactly for this reason – had been sent by the emperor as envoys to the royal courts of the West, to the Pope, or to the sultan. They also spoke on the emperor's behalf with the authorities or private citizens of the Italian cities.²² Sophia Mergiali has identified twenty-one

¹⁸ Syropoulos, 138: “Then they summoned the *mesazontes* and the *mezas domestikos* and they deliberated with them”; Sphrantzes, 116: the council decides on the most advantageous marriage for Constantine according to the emperor's own statement.

¹⁹ Syropoulos, 154: “Angelos ... one of the good and select *archontes*, and when the emperor has with him four of the best *archontes* for urgent business, he is always one of them”.

²⁰ Ganchou, ‘Le *mesazon*’, 269.

²¹ N. Oikonomides, ‘Byzantine Diplomacy, A.D. 1204–1453: means and ends’, *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard – S. Franklin (Aldershot 1992), 73–87.

²² Elisabeth Malamut, ‘De 1299 à 1451. Au coeur des ambassades byzantines’,

ambassadors of Manuel II and twenty–three ambassadors of John VIII.²³ Among them figured both secular and ecclesiastical officials, as well as foreigners who acted as the emperor’s representatives. Given the scope of the present study, we shall not be concerned with the churchmen, who in any case were used for particular missions in connection with the Union; we are interested in the secular *archontes*, that is those individuals who forged foreign policy together with the emperor and who were characterised by their knowledge of languages and the influence they had on their various interlocutors. As a rule, the ‘legates’ (ἀποκρισιάρχοι), as they were called, also had a high status at court; only ten of the *apokrisiarioi* known to us appear solely in the capacity of ambassador.²⁴ The ambassadors’ social status is clearly depicted in the *Interviews with Dead Men* of Mazaris, which comments on the son of a Latin professor who was both an ambassador and had rented the collection of the salt tax.²⁵ Mazaris’ caustic remark indicates that ambassadors were not chosen casually and that some at least, no doubt because of their linguistic ability, were sent to negotiate with the same people. Indeed, we know the names of ambassadors who systematically took on embassies to particular destinations. Constantine Ralles Palaiologos, for example, and Alexios Disypatos were sent to the French court to collect money, Manuel and John Disypatos to the Pope, while Manuel Philanthropenos travelled to Hungary, Poland and Lithuania. Of course, the short period that concerns us explains the constant presence of individuals who were familiar with their negotiating partners. It was an unwelcome surprise to the Venetians when Notaras was missing from the emperor’s entourage on his journey to Florence.²⁶ Theologos Korax was such

Bisanzio, Venezia e il mondo franco–greco, 79–124.

²³ Sophia Mergiali–Sahas, ‘A Byzantine Ambassador to the West and his Office during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: A Profile’, *BZ* 94 (2001), 588–604.

²⁴ Manuel and John Disypatos, Andronikos Iagaris, Manuel Philanthropenos, Constantine and Theodore Ralles Palaiologos, Manuel Chrysoloras and Manuel Koreses, Alexios Branas, Theodore Karystenos.

²⁵ Mazaris, 46–7: “Well, my most charming friend, how is my son, your colleague at court, making out? Is he still in the salt administration, as before? Or is he only an interpreter of discussions and messages between Greeks and Latins?”

²⁶ Syropoulos, 214: “[the Venetian magistrates] asked, if the emperor had the *mesazontes* with him, that is Kantakouzenos and Notaras”, and on hearing that

a regular emissary to the Turks that he was serving their interests, as Manuel II finally discovered.²⁷ But there were also people who turn up only once as imperial envoys on particular missions, like Nicholas Mamalis, whom Manuel II sent to Crete to negotiate with the Venetians for the tax exemption of Byzantine traders who visited the island,²⁸ or Libadarios who represented the emperor only once, at Pera in 1402.²⁹

Generally, the people who went on embassies belonged to the entourage of the reigning emperor. According to the list established by Mergiali, seven of the twenty–one ambassadors sent by Manuel II were his relatives (Hilarion Doria, Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes, Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos, Demetrios Palaiologos, Manuel Philanthropenos), and one, Manuel Chrysoloras, was his closest friend and collaborator.³⁰ Correspondingly, of the twenty–three ambassadors of John VIII, three belonged to the Disypatos family, and three to that of Iagaris, who also bore the surname of Palaiologos; others who took part in diplomatic missions were the *protovestiarites* Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites, the senator Manuel Tarchaneiotos Boullotes, John’s personal secretary, Demetrios Angelos Philommates Kleidas. The envoys of Constantine Palaiologos present a similar collective profile.³¹

But if it is certain that those who took part in diplomatic missions belonged to the class of the *archontes*, it is not clear what benefit they derived from their participation. The information we have concerning the money they received at their destination does not indicate whether the sums in question were meant only to cover their expenses, or whether they constituted some form of remuneration. We know, for

they were not present, said, “it seems to us, that it was essential to have one of them here”.

²⁷ Doukas, XII.7.

²⁸ Ganchou, ‘Giocomo Badoer et kyr Théodoros Batatzès *chomermhier di pesi*’, 66 n. 59.

²⁹ Balard, ‘La société pérote’, 306 n. 29.

³⁰ Mergiali–Sahas, ‘A Byzantine Ambassador to the West’, 598–604.

³¹ Élisabeth Malamut, ‘Les ambassades du dernier empereur byzantin’, *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron* [= *Travaux et mémoires*, 14] (Paris 2002), 429–48.

example, that Manuel II's uncle, Theodore Kantakouzenos, received from the king of France the sum of 300 gold coins on 29 January 1397, and the following sums in the next year: 400 on 18 April, 2000 on 24 May, and 12,000 on 28 June; during the same mission, Nicholas Notaras was given 1,000 coins, while Alexios Branas received 400 florins in 1409.³² It is interesting, too, that Constantine Ralles Palaiologos and Alexios Disypatos, envoys to the king of France in 1405–6, were accused by Manuel Chrysoloras of financial misconduct.³³ Sphrantzes, from a different viewpoint, bitterly criticises Loukas Notaras for seeking to join him and Manuel Melanchrenos on an embassy to the Turks, which launched his political career.³⁴ Finally, certain *apokrisiarioi* created, in the countries where they were sent by the emperor, ties which allowed them and their descendants to survive after the Fall.³⁵

As for appointments to regional governorships, they were made with the title of *kephale*, whether it was for the administration of Constantinople, or for that of the islands or the other areas that reverted temporarily to the jurisdiction of the Byzantine emperor. Members of the Leontares and Asan families are mentioned as *kephales* of Constantinople, whereas members of the Asan family appear as *kephales* of Lemnos and Imbros throughout the 15th century (Manuel Asan in Imbros around 1444, Isaac Asan in Lemnos). The *kephale* of Agathopolis in 1437 was Constantine Palaiologos, who, according to the account book of Badoer, was involved in the Black Sea grain trade. The exact functions of the *kephale* remain an open question; what is certain is that in the 15th century, as before, the

³² Malamut, 'Au coeur des ambassades byzantines', 115 n. 214.

³³ Ibid., 116.

³⁴ Sphrantzes, 26.

³⁵ Apart from the Notarades who developed all kinds of ties with Venice and Genoa through their business activity, a good example is the family of the Disypatoi, who had converted to Catholicism. One of them, John Disypatos, seems to have been in the service of Pope Eugenius IV. After 1453, one George Palaiologos Disypatos is to be found in the service of the king of France Louis XI: see J. Harris, *Greek émigrés in the West 1400–1520* (Camberley 1995), 175ff; idem, 'Bessarion on Shipbuilding: A Re-interpretation', *Bsl* 55/2 (1994), 299–300.

kephales had the right to collect taxes in their localities.³⁶ Two points are particularly interesting to note: firstly, that both Manuel Leontares and Paul Asan, *kephales* of Constantinople, were involved in the city's commerce; secondly, that no known *kephale* of the City came from an entrepreneurial family.³⁷

On the subject of state organisation, special mention should be made of judicial authority. The post of 'judge general' (καθολικός κριτής) was held by only two individuals known to us, George Scholarios and Phrangoulios Servopoulos. We have already commented on the behaviour of the judge Katablattas, who is perhaps to be identified with Demetrios Katablattas Katadokeinos. Among the privileges that John VIII granted to the two Florentine magistrates were the right to legitimise illegitimate children and the right to appoint notaries.³⁸ We should also mention the *logariastes* of the court who, it seems, had responsibility not only for imperial property but also for the public finances.³⁹ We do not know how the fiscal system of Constantinople worked. But in all probability the tax-officials and the *kommerkiarioi*, both those who worked for the emperor, about whom we have only indirect information,⁴⁰ and those who rented the collection of revenue from the *kommerkion*, were controlled by the *logariastes* of the court, who was responsible for the "accounts".

There is one important administrative term that occurs in this period whose exact meaning is not immediately apparent. This is the term "the official from the civic body" (ὁ ἀπὸ τῆς πολιτείας ἄρχων),⁴¹

³⁶ L. Maksimović, *The Byzantine Provincial Administration under the Palaiologoi* (Amsterdam 1988), 117ff.

³⁷ See especially for this period the comments of K.–P. Matschke, 'Notes on the Economic Establishment and Social Order of the Late Byzantine *Kephalai*', *BF* 19 (1993), 139–43.

³⁸ *PP* III, 345–8.

³⁹ According to Mazaris (46–7), Mouskaranos as *logariastes* of the court had got involved in "that matter of the imperial timber that was shipped to Alexandria", he was the superior of the Latin who ran the salt works, and he was the "state auditor" of the Byzantines.

⁴⁰ Matschke, 'Commerce', 801

⁴¹ *MM* II, 472 (Andreas Argyropoulos).

and its synonyms “the civic officials” (οἱ πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες)⁴² and “the official from the citizens” (ὁ ἀπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν ἄρχων).⁴³ The individuals mentioned in this capacity were Thomas Kalokyres, John Melidones and Andreas Argyropoulos. All three were engaged in commercial and banking activity in Constantinople, they were wealthy,⁴⁴ and they appear with no other designation apart from that of *oikeios*. We know them and their designations from judicial decisions of the Patriarchate in 1400–1401 settling their differences with third parties. If their designation as “civic officials” (πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες) does not just allude to their powerful economic status, we should investigate the possibility that these *archontes* were members of a kind of “civic authority”.

There is no explicit reference in the sources to the existence of such an authority. However, we have enough stray information to allow us to suppose that the inhabitants of Constantinople had their own magistracy, independent of imperial power. Doukas repeatedly and sometimes critically refers to what seem to have been collective decisions taken by the people of Constantinople. He criticises, for example, their decision to surrender the city to John VII, even though he later admits that they subsequently sent Bayezid’s envoys away.⁴⁵ He also refers to the fact that the inhabitants of Constantinople sent envoys to Mehmet II to congratulate him on becoming sultan.⁴⁶ And in another instance the people of the City acted in common: they took the decision to send a delegation to Mehmet on the occasion of the building of the fortress of Rumeli Hisar.⁴⁷ Of course, if we knew how

⁴² MM II, 493 (Thomas Kalokyres).

⁴³ MM II, 495 (John Melidones).

⁴⁴ The wealth of Kalokyres and Melidones, who both had the title of *oikeios*, is proved by the fact that the former appears as a moneylender to people who had difficulty paying the debts they had contracted, while the latter bought real estate in Constantinople at the time of the mass exodus of its inhabitants because of the siege by Bayezid.

⁴⁵ The decision is mentioned in a different way by Ignatios of Smolensk (Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 100), who talks about the “common people” who opened the gates of the city to John and the Greeks who were with him, but not to the Turks.

⁴⁶ Doukas, XXXIII.12.

⁴⁷ Doukas, XXXIV.2, 7; XXXVI.1; Kritoboulos I.7, §1: “the emperor Constantine

many people took part in these delegations, we would have a further indication of the collective activity of the people of Constantinople, but all the sources are silent on this subject.

The operation of a ‘civic authority’ in Constantinople, with relative independence from the emperor, does not leap out of the sources, yet it is not improbable. Something comparable is well attested in Thessaloniki, where it has been proved that the richest inhabitants formed their own council.⁴⁸ Symeon, metropolitan of Thessaloniki, makes a clear distinction between the members of the senate and the *politeia*, who were called upon to share the costs of defence.⁴⁹ Where Constantinople is concerned, it is interesting that the term *politeia* is often used in the sources as a complement or in contrast to those of *synkletos* (senate) and *synkletikoi* (senators). Argyropoulos comments on the fact that Katablattas took part in an inappropriate manner in the City prefect’s mourning, where many “of the *synkletos* and the *politeia*” had gone to present their condolences;⁵⁰ his anti-hero had thus been present, in a manner unbecoming his rank, with *archontes* who certainly had a different background from him, although among themselves they were of different social status. Argyropoulos’ comment might be taken to imply a purely social differentiation, but in other cases the distinction between *politeia* and *synkletos* also reveals distinct political functions. Scholarios is clearly alluding to the political function of the *politeia* in a letter where he asks to be allowed to come to the palace and to discuss Union with the three orders of citizens: “let me come to the palace, and let the three orders of citizens be there, the senate, the church

and the people of the City on hearing of this [the projected fortress], were greatly upset ... They therefore decided to send a delegation from among those present.” See also Chalkokondyles, book VIII, p. 156: “when this news was reported to the Hellenes, they deliberated and decided to risk themselves in defending the city rather than to abandon it to its fate by sailing away without a fight”.

⁴⁸ Nevra Necipoğlu, ‘The Aristocracy in Late Byzantine Thessaloniki: A Case Study of the City’s *Archontes* (Late 14th and Early 15th Centuries)’, *DOP* 57 (2003), 133–51. See also D. Jacoby, ‘Thessalonique de la domination byzantine à celle de Venise. Continuité, adaptation ou rupture?’, *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, 305–6.

⁴⁹ Symeon, ed. Balfour, 57.

⁵⁰ Canivet–Oikonomides, 63.

and the *politeia*.⁵¹ Kritoboulos refers to an equivalent function when he says that Giovanni Giustiniani was received with honour “by the emperor, those in rank, and the *politeia*”;⁵² while Sphrantzes writes that among other things that determined the choice of Constantine XI as emperor was “the love of almost everyone in the City”.⁵³

According to the passages cited above, the *politeia*, to which the various authors refer, invariably had a say in the management of political life and its assent was needed in critical matters like the acclamation of the new emperor. At the same time, it claimed an autonomous and thus decisive role in the development of Constantinople’s relations with the Turks, as we saw earlier. We may therefore understand *politeia* as a term referring to a collective body, incorporating the rich inhabitants of the city, who appear elsewhere as “civic *archontes*” (πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες). These civic *archontes* did not have dignities, and perhaps could only aspire to the title of *oikeios*, which the emperor conferred on them from time to time in order to ensure their support. From this point of view, it is obviously not accidental that under John VII and Manuel II, Nicholas and John Sophianos, Nicholas Notaras, Theodore Mamalis or Andreas Argyropoulos all appear with the title of *oikeios*.

The existence and the operation of a collective body identical with the *politeia* of the sources may give an additional dimension to the perceptible absence of active businessmen from the court of John Palaiologos, and to the fact that throughout this period we do not find businessmen in the capacity of *kephale*, as K.-P. Matschke has pointed out.⁵⁴ In other words, I think that some of the merchants who appear in Badoer’s account book with the title *Kyr*, which is indicative of social standing, took part in this collectivity that constituted a ‘civic

⁵¹ *Oeuvres complètes*, III, 169: ἄς ἐνε αἱ τρεῖς τάξεις τῶν πολιτῶν, ἡ σύγκλητος, ἡ ἐκκλησία καὶ ἡ πολιτεία.

⁵² Kritoboulos, I.25 §2: παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει καὶ τῆς πολιτείας.

⁵³ Sphrantzes, 100: αὐτὴ ἡ μητὴρ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ τὸ πρωτεῖον τοῦ χρόνου καὶ ... ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν ἐν τῇ Πόλει σχεδὸν πάντων τὸν κύρ Κωνσταντῖνον εἰς βασιλεῖα κρίνουσι.

⁵⁴ Matschke, ‘Notes on the Economic Establishment’, 143.

authority’. It is also in this body, in my opinion, that we should look for the *prokritoi* who alone of the city’s inhabitants did not labour for the repair of the Kontoskalion, since by the emperor’s order they were in charge of the rest. Finally, we should perhaps include in the *politeia* the *demarchoi*, whom Constantine Palaiologos asked for a detailed inventory of their strength in men and weapons during the days of the siege.⁵⁵

Apart from the evidence set out above, the likelihood that a ‘popular’ or ‘civic’ authority functioned in Constantinople is strengthened by the fact that the Latin documents refer to the latter as a *civitas* and to its inhabitants as citizens.⁵⁶ We have seen that when Scholarios refers to the inhabitants of the city as *polites* he gives them a political dimension, as does Doukas very often. Such characterisations imply not only the formation of a collective identity based on place of origin, but also a political function. This context gives added significance to the distinction that Doukas makes between the “municipality” (δημος) and the “people” (λαός),⁵⁷ which indeed he refers to on another occasion as the “common people” (κοινὸν λαόν).⁵⁸

If this reading of the evidence is correct, we may confidently suppose that two poles of political authority were forming in Constantinople, one around the emperor and the *archontes*, and the other around the ‘municipality’, with clear analogies to the city-states of Italy in their formative period.

⁵⁵ Sphrantzes, 132. For a commentary on *demarchoi*, see K.-P. Matschke, “Rolle und Aufgaben der Demarchen in der spätbyzantinischen Hauptstadt”, *Das spätbyzantinische Konstantinopel. Alte und neue Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte zwischen 1261 und 1453*, (Hamburg 2008), 153–87.

⁵⁶ Jorga, VIII.94: the decision of the Venetian Senate (19 February 1453) to send armed ships to Constantinople begins thus: *Ob reverentiam Dei, bonum christianorum, honorem nostri dominii et pro commodo et utilitate mercatorum et civium nostrorum est providendum quod civitas Constantinopolis, que dici et reputari potest nostri dominii, non deveniat ad manus Infidelium*. A similar formulation in Jorga VIII.98: *quod a novitatibus et oppressionibus civitatis Constantinopolis se abstinere velit et concordium capere cum domino imperatore*.

⁵⁷ Doukas, XIV.3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, XIV.4.

B. The management of public finances

Analogies with the Italian city-states are even more evident on the level of the economy, given that, as has been pointed out many times, Constantinople remained an important port of the eastern Mediterranean. It was precisely with the business of the port that the public finances were connected: state revenues came mainly from customs dues, the *kommerkion*, and from indirect taxes on consumables, all of which the state farmed out to individuals or to partnerships of tax-collectors. The last Palaiologoi appear to have imposed direct taxation when they needed to cover extraordinary expenses, such as the repair of the walls and the Kontoskalion harbour, or the creation of a fleet.⁵⁹

The basic products that brought in revenue to the state were salt, of which the emperor had the monopoly, and wine. Both products and their distribution were not destined solely for consumption in the city, but mainly for provisioning the ships that came to the port of Constantinople. The wine trade, especially, and the interests of those who handled it, were a constant concern of the last Byzantine emperors. Apart from the relevant ordinances that are included in the treaties with the Italian cities and especially with Venice,⁶⁰ it is revealing that when the papal envoys were due to come to Constantinople, John VIII sent the following message with Disypatos: “[the emperor] agrees for you to come to Constantinople in October

⁵⁹ PP III, 170–1, 186.

⁶⁰ MM III, 137: the number of Venetian taverns in Constantinople is fixed at fifteen, since, in the words of the Byzantines, “our revenues and customs dues are harmed by the many taverns that the Venetians hold in Constantinople, and the great quantity of wine sold in them”. The same stipulation is repeated in all treaties to 1447 (MM III, 146, 156, 165, 179, 188, 209, 2170. Apart from the conditions of the treaties, both Manuel (1418) and John (1423) tried to impose an additional tax on the consumption of wine on the Venetians of Constantinople, something that brought them into continual and unsuccessful negotiations with the Venetian authorities. It is interesting that Manuel, apart from the penury of the public treasury, explained his decision by saying that many Venetian citizens, both Christians and Jews, falsely declared as Venetian wine that came from Byzantines and Turks, in order to evade taxation: see Julian Chrysostomides, ‘Venetian Commercial Privileges under the Palaeologi’, *Studi Veneziani* 12 (1970), 308–11.

after the wine has been brought in, lest if you come early there be a battle and the revenues be left outside”.⁶¹ The trade in smoked fish was also connected with the provisioning of ships. This was an abundant commodity in the region and its taxation was always an important source of revenue for the public treasury.⁶²

However, despite imperial efforts to protect the traders in the products that were most profitable for the fisc,⁶³ and despite the ups-and-downs of Italian trade in the Levant,⁶⁴ the ascendancy of the Italian merchants was assured. The state revenue from customs dues diminished steadily, not only because of the facilities that the emperor granted to foreign merchants, but also because business in the port of Constantinople was clearly smaller than that in the port of Galata across the Golden Horn. The fact that the Genoese authorities constantly imposed lower customs dues (2% in Pera as opposed to 10% in Constantinople), combined with the greater turnover of ships that took on provisions at Pera travelling to and from the Black Sea, resulted in lower prices being charged for goods traded in the Genoese colony, and especially in necessities for ships.⁶⁵ Thus, at a time when trade was flourishing and although Constantinople kept its privileged commercial position, Byzantium faced a reduction in revenue owing to tough competition

⁶¹ Συγορουλος, 178–80: ἀποδέχεται ὁ βασιλεὺς ἵνα εὐρεθῆτε εἰς τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν κατὰ τὸν μῆνα ὀκτώβριον μετὰ τὸ συναχθῆναι καὶ τὸν οἶνον ἐντός, μήποτε ἐλθόντων ὑμῶν πρότερον γένηται μάχη καὶ ἐναπολειφθῶσι τὰ εἰσοδήματα ἔξω.

⁶² G. Dagron, ‘Poissons, pêcheurs et poissonniers’, *Constantinople and its Hinterland*, 57–73.

⁶³ For these efforts, see primarily Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 41ff. See too D. Jacoby, ‘Les Vénitiens naturalisés dans l’Empire byzantin: un aspect de l’expansion de Venise en Romanie du XIII^e au milieu du XV^e siècle’, *Travaux et mémoires* 8 (1981), 217–35 [= *Studies on the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion* (London 1989), no. IX].

⁶⁴ M. Balard, ‘L’organisation des colonies étrangères dans l’Empire byzantin (XII^e–XV^e siècle’, *Hommes et richesses dans l’Empire byzantin*, II (Paris 1991), 261–76, contrasts the slowdown in Venetian trade in the region during the years 1390–1410 and its revival after 1440, which is also evident in Badoer’s account book. In the interval, a slight superiority of the Genoese is noticeable, especially after 1406.

⁶⁵ Balard, ‘L’organisation des colonies étrangères’, 273.

from the Italians.⁶⁶ Very often, and on various occasions, the texts speak of the progressive weakening of the imperial finances, which the emperor himself cites in his negotiations with the Italian cities.⁶⁷

The main expenses for the Byzantine state were defence, foreign policy and the public debt. The appeals by the last Palaiologoi to the West for financial help and the mutual loans that they contracted with the Italian cities have been seen as the surest proof of the bad state of the public finances in the 15th century.

Indeed, during this period the emperors needed money more than ever to confront the Turks both on the military and on the diplomatic level. Defence costs were great, because they had to cover the payment of mercenaries, supplies, and the repair of the walls. A standing obligation of the Byzantine state was the annual tribute to the sultan, which seems to have remained constant at around 100,000 nomismata, although it may have been reduced at certain times according to the circumstances.⁶⁸ It is impossible, however, to estimate the exact level of the state's needs in relation to its income at any particular moment. It is impossible, that is, to draw up even roughly indicative tables of income and expenditure, so as to be able to evaluate the much-publicised poor state of the public finances. As is often the case, hardly any figures are available and they remain unusable through lack of comparative material. For example, we have the sum of 20,000 florins (= 60,000 nomismata) owed, according to Leonardo of Chios, by Manuel Iagaris when he was in charge of repairing the walls at the time of the siege,⁶⁹ but we have no way of knowing what proportion of the

⁶⁶ Cécile Morrisson, 'Monnaie et finance dans l'Empire byzantin (X^e-XIV^e siècle)', *Hommes et richesses*, II, 315.

⁶⁷ A response of the Venetian Senate to Manuel II's letter of 31 May 1418 mentions the emperor's justification of his decision to impose a supplementary tax on wine: ... *vestra Maiestas, cuius commercium sicut in ipsa fatetur propter guerras et mala conditiones presentialiter existentes reductum est quasi ad nihil ...* (Chrysostomides, 'Venetian Commercial Privileges', 355). See also Syropoulos, 110: "it was the emperor's right to convoke the council, but since the imperial revenues were reduced on all sides ..."

⁶⁸ Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 46 n. 3.

⁶⁹ Leonardo of Chios, 30.

total expenditure generated by the siege this represented. It is equally difficult to know what part of that expenditure Constantine Palaiologos intended to cover with the loan of 9,000 nomismata that he contracted with the Genoese of Pera in the presence of Notaras.⁷⁰ Similarly, we do not know to what extra expenses of Pera were represented by the 14,000 pounds that were requested from Genoa when the Turks drew near the City, so as to be able calculate part of the Byzantine requirements.⁷¹ And unfortunately we are not able to evaluate the information that Badoer gave 1% to the Byzantine *kommerkiarioi*; given the Venetians' immunity in the port of Constantinople, we do not know whether the resulting sums of money were meant for the public treasury or for financing the tax officials.⁷² Finally, as a further illustration of the difficulty, we may mention the fact that the dowry of 20,000 nomismata which Notaras settled on each of his daughters (i.e. 60,000 in total) at around the same time can only be compared in purely numerical terms with the sums we have just mentioned or with the tribute payment to give an idea of the great disparity in wealth between the state and the rich *archontes*. This disparity becomes all the more apparent if we make what is perhaps a risky reduction. We know that in the 1340s the emperor gained about 30,000 nomismata from the *kommerkion*, whereas the authorities of Pera took in around 200,000 *nomismata*.⁷³ We also know that in 1402 the revenue from the *kommerkion* in Pera was 20,375 nomismata.⁷⁴ If we suppose that the ratio 1:6 remained stable, then we have 3,395 nomismata as the sum that accrued to the emperor in that year. Of course, the circumstances were exceptional in 1402 because of the siege of Constantinople, but we might perhaps conjecture that even if 1/6 of the customs revenues

⁷⁰ Ganchou, 'Le rachat', 188; the document concerning the loan has been edited by A. Roccatagliata, 'Notai genovesi in oltremare. Atti rogati a Pera (1453)', *Atti della società Ligure di Storia Patria* 39/1 (1999), 145–8.

⁷¹ Jorga, VIII, 88; see also *ibid.*, 99: the Pope grants 14,000 ducats for the maintenance of 5 ships in 1453.

⁷² Maria Gerolymmatou, 'Κωσταντινούπολη-Θράκη-Βιθυνία: η οικονομική μαρτυρία του Giacomo Badoer', *Χρήμα και αγορά στην εποχή των Παλαιολόγων*, ed. N.G. Moschonas (Athens 2003), 118 n.33, 129, with reference to the relevant mentions by Badoer.

⁷³ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 46.

⁷⁴ Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, I, 420.

of Pera represents the lowest limit of the state *kommerkion*, this was still exceptionally low.

With these real difficulties and until the archives of the Italian cities reveal all their secrets, any study of public finance in the 15th century must necessarily be based only on the few solid pieces of information that are available to us.

One indication of the nature and the extent of the expenses comes from Syropoulos' information concerning the budget of 75,000 florins (= 225,000 nomismata) that the Byzantines sent the Pope with regard to the Council. This budget, which did not include the expenses of the emperor and the *archontes*, concerned the cost of sending three ships and three hundred men for the protection of Constantinople, another five or six ships for transporting the Byzantine delegation, and the subsistence costs of the ecclesiastical officials.⁷⁵ Finally the Pope sent 15,000 florins (= 45,000 nomismata), which John VIII distributed as follows: "we gave 2,000 to our brother the despot, and no-one can say that we gave him a lot or that it is unnecessary for him to come with us ... We gave 1,000 to the envoys; this too was necessary. There were 12,000 left and we shared them out too ... because we have many expenses"⁷⁶ Earlier the delegates of the Council of Basle had offered 8,000 florins (= 24,000 nomismata), which, however, seemed too little to the Byzantines and thus they increased their offer to 20,000 florins (= 60,000 nomismata), along with "gold in excess of ten florins" and the possibility of taking what they needed on top of that from Galata.⁷⁷ This information from Syropoulos is useful inasmuch as it allows us to get an idea of the financial side of the Council and the inadequacy of the imperial treasury. At the same time, we see another source of imperial expenditure in the cost of ceremonial display. At another point in his narrative, Syropoulos does not fail to make the bitter comment that the emperor wanted to present himself to the westerners as an important ruler, although he did not have the financial wherewithal.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Syropoulos, 116.

⁷⁶ Syropoulos, 190.

⁷⁷ Syropoulos, 132, 178.

⁷⁸ Syropoulos, 188: "the emperor, taking possession of all those gold coins ... used

If the preparations for the Council generated extraordinary financial needs, it is certain that the sending of ambassadors constituted a regular source of expenses, which were covered in part by the various Western negotiating partners of the Byzantine emperor.⁷⁹ It is worth noting a decision of the Venetian Senate: since many men insisted that they were members of the emperor's entourage in order to ensure their maintenance by the Venetian authorities, the Senate decided (9 January 1424) that it would give a daily allowance not exceeding 8 ducats to John VIII for his expenses.⁸⁰ A month earlier, on 11 December 1423, the Senate had decided to provide another hundred ducats in order to honour the emperor, on top of the sum of a hundred that it had just voted the day before.⁸¹ Previously, in 1397, Hilarion Doria had received an interest-free loan of 300 ducats from the authorities of Pera with the emperor's property as surety in order to conduct a diplomatic mission to the West.⁸²

It is clear that these figures can be indicative of the economic condition of the Byzantine state, but in no way do they allow a systematic study of public finances during the fifty-year period with which we are concerned. On the other hand, we can realistically try to examine the way in which the emperor managed to cover the regular and extraordinary needs of his state.

The fact that the last Palaiologoi alienated or melted down church plate and other valuables in order to obtain cash and mint coinage is well attested.⁸³ For example, during the siege of 1453 the soldiers

them for his personal expenses. With them, he had made a gold-embroidered hanging for his bedchamber and gold-embroidered coverings with gold tassels for the trappings of his mounts, so that the Italians might think he was a grand ruler as he paraded among them".

⁷⁹ See Malamut, 'Au coeur des ambassades byzantines', 113-6, and especially 115 n.217 for Manuel II's letter to the Venetians asking them to cover the expenses of his ambassadors.

⁸⁰ Jorga, V, 152.

⁸¹ Jorga, V, 150.

⁸² Ganchou, "Ilario Doria", 89

⁸³ Leonardo of Chios, 26. Syropoulos, 188, indeed criticises the emperor for the fact that, when he was about to set off for Italy, he used "for his own expenses" the

complained of being unpaid and it was necessary to alienate a portion of church treasure in order to ensure their wages. Orations in praise of the emperors exalt their willingness to expend some of their own property,⁸⁴ and they are also lauded for the just distribution of taxes among their subjects.⁸⁵

Apart from such occasional measures for coping with extraordinary expenditure, a regular tactic for meeting state expenses was the contracting of loans, both with the Italian cities and with individuals. We should observe however that the emperors who looked to the Italian cities for loans did so entirely within the framework of the prevailing financial system. Loans were at that time a standard international practice connected to the rise of capitalism in Western Europe and especially in Italy. Recourse to borrowing was a current financial strategy of the cities and the new monarchies of Europe, combined with the indirect taxation from which loans were repaid.⁸⁶ For the mercantile cities such as Genoa, Venice and Florence the provision of credit to other cities and states was an important business activity; besides, these cities had organised their financial strategy

gold coins that the metropolitan of Russia had given to the Pantokrator monastery.

⁸⁴ See Syropoulos, 190–2: the *mesazon* Kantakouzenos, in discussing the distribution of the money that was being sent by the Pope, says to the patriarch: “Our lord the emperor is spending not only this, but much of his own money; for it is from his own resources that he is fitting out his ship and paying for other things that he needs to have for the journey”. At the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, the emperor had estates in Thrace, from which he sold the grain that they produced (see Laiou, ‘Byzantine Economy’, 218–20). The information from Mazaris about the imperial timber trade with Egypt is also significant, and the involvement of Sophianos from the Peloponnese suggests that the wood came from the local forests (Jacoby, ‘Byzantine Traders’, 259). What constituted the imperial domain just before the Conquest is a question for further research, given that the conflicts between the sons of Manuel II had made each of them almost financially independent in the small region that he ruled.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., *PP* III, 230.

⁸⁶ See P. Monnet, ‘Le financement de l’indépendance urbaine par les élites argentées. L’exemple de Francfort-sur-le Main au XIV^e siècle’, *L’Argent au Moyen Âge. XXVIII^e Congrès de la S.H.M.E.S. (Clermont-Ferrand, 30 mai – 1^{er} juin 1997)* (Paris 1998), 187–207; M. Boone, ‘Stratégies fiscales et financières des élites urbaines et de l’État bourgignon naissant dans l’ancien comté de Flandre (XIV^e–XVI^e siècle)’, *L’Argent au Moyen Âge*, 235–53.

on the basis of their internal public debt. As recent research by A. Molho among others has shown,⁸⁷ the maintenance of the public debt was essential to the Italian cities if they were to meet the increased expenses caused by their continual wars. The state in such cases borrowed from its rich citizens who collected the loans, thereby acquiring political as well as financial power. In this situation of general borrowing, Byzantium was not unusual; nor is the fact that it sought loans indicative in itself of the state’s financial weakness or dependence on the West. On the contrary, the contracting of loans could be considered an indication of the ‘modernisation’ of Byzantine state finance and its incorporation into the system of the ‘pre-capitalist’ economies of the Eastern Mediterranean.

What is crucial is the size of the loans in question and how they were repaid. We have referred to the loan of 9,000 nomismata contracted with the Genoese of Pera on the eve of the Conquest. At the same time the rich citizens of Pera loaned other sums, for which it seems that the guarantor was Notaras.⁸⁸ Besides, Notaras, with his property as surety, received a loan from the Venetians as well, which by all indications was meant for the defence of the city.⁸⁹ We also know of a loan of 885 florins (= 2,655 nomismata) from the Florentines Jacopo and Zaccaria Donato with a repayment term of four months,⁹⁰ and one of 800 ducats (= 2,400 nomismata) that the Genoese Benedetto Doria provided to John VIII in 1430.⁹¹ Already in 1343, Venice had provided a loan of 30,000 ducats (= 90,000 nomismata) to the Byzantine emperor at 5% interest to be repaid in three years. However, this loan seems never to have been repaid, since the sum and repayment terms recur in all Venetian treaties with Byzantium until 1447.⁹² Finally, another loan from Venice, of 1,500 ducats, is

⁸⁷ A. Molho, ‘The State and Public Finance: A Hypothesis based on the History of Late Medieval Florence’, *The Journal of Modern History* 67 suppl. (December 1995), 97–135.

⁸⁸ Ganchou, ‘Le rachat’, 188.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 164; for Notaras’ mediation see also Matschke, ‘The Notaras Family’, 65

⁹⁰ *PP* III, 353.

⁹¹ Jorga, VII, 47.

⁹² *MM*, III, 212, 220. See also Jorga, VIII, 43: the emperor recognises the 30,000

attested in 1424,⁹³ which was settled in 1437 in the following manner: the emperor would repay 500 ducats, 500 would be written off against the damage that the Venetians had caused to the Byzantine fleet at Lemnos in 1425, and Andrea Mocenigo undertook to pay the remaining 500.⁹⁴ It is estimated that the total debt to Venice stood, in 1453, at 195,000 ducats (= 585,000 *hyperpyra*), and that at the time of the Conquest the debts of the Byzantine state totalled 19,275,000 *hyperpyra*.⁹⁵ The rich *archontes* often took out loans on the emperor's account, especially Notaras towards the end, as we have seen. The ambassadors sent to the West were charged, among other things, with collecting money, in which they were sometimes successful. Nicholas Notaras, for example, managed to collect 500 ducats from the cities of Tuscany, while the king of France contributed 12,000 gold francs, of which 7,000 gold ducats reached Constantinople via Venice.⁹⁶

If we rely on the narrative sources, for want of other material, we find that the emperors of the 15th century were walking a tightrope in their financial relations with the Italian cities, trying to maintain an extremely precarious balance. This becomes clear from the way in which they granted or removed the Italian commercial privileges in the port of Constantinople. Constantine XI Palaiologos imposed new taxes on the Venetians,⁹⁷ who complained about the dues on hides and on wine from Adrianople, and refused the 2% relief requested by the Ragusans.⁹⁸ Yet at the same time, he exempted the Genoese from all dues, with a view to securing the city's food supply.⁹⁹ Earlier,

ducat/90,000 nomismata debt, and another of 5,000 ducats (= 15,000 nomismata) that he had contracted at Ainos in the presence of Faliero, binding himself to pay 17,143 nomismata within five years from the signing of the treaty.

⁹³ Jorga, V, 152, 155. The witnesses present at the agreement of the loan were Manuel Iagaris and Manuel Scamatismenos (Eskamatismenos).

⁹⁴ See the comments of Djurić. *Le crépuscule*, 242 n.2.

⁹⁵ Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 242.

⁹⁶ Chatzopoulos, *Le premier siège de Constantinople par les Ottomans*, 73–4.

⁹⁷ Jorga, VIII, 67: in addition to the abolition of the taxes, the Venetians demanded immediate payment of the 17,143 nomismata (see above, n. 92).

⁹⁸ *PP* IV, 23–5; see also *MM* III, 229.

⁹⁹ See Jorga, VIII, 85. See in this connection Necipoğlu, 'Social and Economic

John VIII had ordered Notaras to offer the Venetians planks for building landing-stages where they could moor their ships, and in order to please Venice, he had granted privileges to Florence, her ally in the war with the Visconti duke of Milan and lord of Genoa. These privileges included a reduction of customs dues to a rate of 2%.¹⁰⁰

Concomitant with the privileges that the Byzantine state granted to the Italian merchants was its dependence on the Italian cities. It also followed that Genoa and, especially, Venice provided the emperor with economic facilities in regard to the repayment of his loans, so as to maintain their ascendancy in the Eastern Mediterranean. If, for example, the unpaid loan of 30,000 ducats, which recurs in the Venetian–Byzantine treaties, is compared with the Venetian state revenues, which amounted to 774,000 ducats in 1423,¹⁰¹ it becomes clear that the economic cost of this investment for Venice was negligible. The gain, however, was many times greater, since by having Constantinople in its debt, Venice secured an advantageous position in international trade.

In spite of its dependence on the Italians and the generally bad state of its finances, the fact remains that in this last period of its existence the Byzantine state managed to conduct its foreign policy in economic terms. At the same time, it is interesting that the emperor's relationship with his wealthy subjects was also basically economic. This was not just because in some cases he appears to have sold the dignities that he bestowed,¹⁰² or because those with connections to the Italian cities secured the loans

Conditions in Constantinople', 78–9. In general on foreign merchants, see Balard, 'L'organisation des colonies étrangères', 267 ff.

¹⁰⁰ *PP* III, 341, where it is noted that the privilege is granted, "despite the difficulty that arises on account of the resulting reduction in the imperial revenues".

¹⁰¹ Commissione per la Pubblicazione dei documenti finanziari della Repubblica di Venezia, *Serie Seconda. Bilanci generali*, I/1 (Venice 1912), 94

¹⁰² The husband of Anna Asanina Palaiologina, a Palaiologos, is said to have bought a governorship (κεφαλαττικιο) around 1393. Since he was unable to pay for it, and in order to avoid being sent to prison, he sold to Georges Goudeles a vineyard from Asanina's dowry in Constantinople (*MM* II, 362). Matschke, 'Notes on the Economic Establishment', 142, comments that Asanina's husband was probably Isaac Asan and that he served as a tax-collector.

that he needed. Nor indeed was it because they performed personal services for him (like Notaras who provided his ship for transporting Constantine Palaiologos),¹⁰³ or because they, as traders, exported the products of the imperial estates.¹⁰⁴ In essence, the emperor had yielded control of the public finances to the merchants of Constantinople and he was dependent on them, because along with the contract to collect taxes on consumption, they could ensure regular state revenues and also assume part of the expenses for the defence and supply of the city. We mentioned that the state rented out to both individuals and tax-collecting partnerships the income from the *kommerkion* on basic consumer products – wine, cereals, and fish. It also rented out the taxes on the sales of slaves, the exploitation of salt-pans,¹⁰⁵ and the minting of coinage.¹⁰⁶ The *kommerkiarioi* came from the rich business class of the city, as is clear from the known cases of *kommerkion* tax-farmers. Examples are Kyr Theodore Vatatzes, *chomechier di pesi*,¹⁰⁷ Demetrios Notaras, and even the banker Constantine Kritopoulos *de la zecha* who had rented the right to mint coins.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the importance of the sales-tax farm for the public treasury is apparent from the information that John VII had offered 8,000 *hyperpyra* to the two treasurers of Pera to urge their fellow-citizens to join in the bidding for the sales-tax contract that no-one was interested in claiming.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Sphrantzes, 88.

¹⁰⁴ Apart from John Goudeles, referred to above, we encounter Manuel Kabasilas, who in 1389 transported 5,421 *mines* of grain to Genoa, while there is also a reference to Leontares who in 1402 acted as John VII's agent in selling grain to Constantinople in collaboration with the authorities in Pera: see Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, II, 758.

¹⁰⁵ For the farming of salt-pans and the salt tax, see Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 78; see also the case of the Latin who was both an ambassador and had the 'salt administration', as Mazaris describes it.

¹⁰⁶ K.-P. Matschke, 'Münzstätten, Münzer und Münzprägung im späten Byzanz', *Revue numismatique* 152 (1997), 191–211.

¹⁰⁷ Ganchou, 'Giacomo Badoer et kyr Théodoros Batatzès *chomechier di pesi*', 49–95.

¹⁰⁸ Matschke, 'Münzstätten', 197–8, identifies Constantine Kritopoulos with a certain Kritopoulos, who is mentioned by Syropoulos having taking part in the negotiations for the Council. Syropoulos, 168, says: 'the emperor was present with the *mesazontes* and the teacher Scholarios and Kritopoulos'.

¹⁰⁹ Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, I, 100 n. 348: in the end, the taxes of Constantinople

We do not know how and where the bidding for the tax-collection contracts worked in detail. We may suppose, however, that the mechanism was similar to that revealed by the case of Demetrios Boullotes, which is documented in the judicial decisions of the Patriarchate. In 1401, the *oikeios* Demetrios Boullotes guaranteed the emperor a payment of 200 *hyperpyra* for the rights to collect the gifts of the faithful who venerated the holy icon of the Panagia Koubouklaraia. Previously, the cleric Gavras had received the rights to the icon for a guaranteed payment of 300 *hyperpyra*.¹¹⁰

Given the state's inability, already from the end of the 14th century, to pay the salaries of its employees, tax-farming functioned as a recompense to the *archontes* for their services to the emperor; at the same time, however, it was a sure source of enrichment for all title holders.¹¹¹ This financial practice tied the interests of the *archontes* to the fortunes of the state and, moreover, allowed the rich inhabitants of the city to take a substantial share in the exercise of power, even when they were not title-holders. The fact that they had, according to all indications, their own 'rule' was a consequence of their ability to guarantee important revenues for the public treasury.

The state created new *commerchi* by taxing other varieties of the same product or even discovering new products to tax.¹¹² While there can be no doubt that the rise in the number of taxable products derived from the ever-increasing imperative to find sources of income, it also became a means for the emperor to intervene in the redistribution

were sold for 54,000 *hyperpyra*.

¹¹⁰ MM II, 513–4.

¹¹¹ The sources of the time make it clear that titles increased the wealth of the *archontes*. Even Notaras, according to Sphrantzes, would have lost an income (*πρόσοδον*) if he had lost his office of *mesazon* (*μεσσαστικιο*). See also the comments of Mazaris' comments, 36, 42, on those who were involved in public services.

¹¹² Ganchou, 'Giacomo Badoer', 94–5, points out that there existed: (1) a customs tax on *macinatura*, i.e. on flour, which was different from the grain *kommerkion*; (2) a fishing tax (*ἀλιευτική*) on fish in general and a *kommerkion* on *pesi saladi* (cured fish) in particular; (3) a *chomerchio del nolizado*, which was levied on the hiring of boats.

of profits and ensure wider political acceptance by renting out the *kommerkion* to more people.

From our study of the offices and titles that existed in the 15th century, it has emerged that the Byzantine state was based on simple administrative structures, at the head of which was the emperor and a small group of title-holders. We have ascribed the simplification of administrative structures to the territorial contraction of the Byzantine emperor's area of jurisdiction, but it became apparent, I think, that it was also the result of the political orientation of the ruling group in Byzantine society, which no longer had need for the nexus of relationships that had been indispensable to the landowning aristocracy of the preceding period, both on an economic and on a symbolic level. The organisation of a flexible and lightly-staffed administrative system also allowed the *archontes* to manage both the diplomatic relations that affected them as well as the functioning of the state, with which their fortune was linked.

The *archontes* needed the emperor's support; it was the emperor who managed the distribution of offices and he apportioned the tax-farms. They were consequently dependent on him for economic reasons, certainly, but also to maintain their power. The control they exercised over public finances, mainly by means of tax-farming, mitigated their economic insecurity, while the offices they held increased their negotiating capability with regard to the sultan and the Italian cities. It is of additional interest that the emperor and the *archontes*, in view of the financial power of the entrepreneurs, and under the pressure of the Turkish threat, allowed the people to take a substantial part in taking critical political decisions.

PART 3

POLITICAL PRACTICE AND IDEOLOGY

1. The Political System

A. *The people (δῆμος)*

The narrative sources of the period hint at the calling of ‘assemblies’ of the inhabitants of Constantinople. This is especially interesting for the functioning of the Byzantine political system at the time. Of course, the presence of the people had important precedents in Byzantium. The people remained one of the basic constitutional factors, even when its presence was needed only to give ritual endorsement to a new emperor’s accession to the throne.¹ In the 15th century, however, it seems that the intervention of the *demos* was not merely ceremonial. We have already commented on the fact that the historians of the Fall indirectly refer to assemblies of the city’s inhabitants, at which critical decisions were taken, and especially decisions regarding overtures for peace agreements with the Turks. Doukas alludes to a collective decision of the inhabitants of Constantinople not to surrender the city to Bayezid, despite the suffering caused by the siege, and deplores what he calls the “foolish congregation of the Romans”,² because they decided to send an embassy to the sultan, even though, when he later refers to the members of this mission, he presents them as envoys “of the emperor and the senate”.³ Also according to the historians of the Fall, the *demos* intervened in the internal dynastic struggles of the Palaiologoi by showing its preference for one emperor or another. Chalkokondyles, for example, attributes Manuel’s election as emperor to a collective decision by the

¹ I. Karagiannopoulos, *Η πολιτική θεωρία των Βυζαντινών* (Thessaloniki 1988), 55–9.

² Doukas, XIV.1: μωρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων συναγωγή.

³ Doukas, XXXIV.2: τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς συγκλήτου

“Byzantines”,⁴ while Doukas notes that Manuel was afraid, in view of his conflict with John VII, lest the “people” become divided if the conflict dragged on.⁵ In the same connection, Doukas informs us that when Manuel Palaiologos handed over the city to his rival, he spoke “before all the aristocracy and the people”.⁶ Chalkokondyles testifies, moreover, to the involvement and the consent of the people in the election of Constantine Palaiologos as successor to John VIII: it was made “by the people of the city, his mother, the middle class and the *mesazontes*, Kantakouzenos and Notaras”.⁷ Finally, John Dokeianos, referring to Constantine Palaiologos, says that *all* awaited his arrival as emperor, “the reverent brethren, all the senate, the royal priesthood and the whole people of the Romans”.⁸ In another context, Scholarios mentions the “popular votes” to which the papal legate resorted in order to strengthen the decree of church union.⁹ Apart from these admittedly fragmentary but revealing testimonies to the role that the *demos* played in important decision-making, we may note that Manuel Chrysoloras complimented Manuel Palaiologos for associating his subjects in his decisions.¹⁰

The assemblies of the citizens of Constantinople and the calling of them is a question connected with that of the way the last Palaioiogoi were obliged to govern. Certain assemblies are known

⁴ Chalkokondyles, Book II, p. 57: “sending a messenger to Byzantion he asked the Byzantines for their opinion, whom they wanted to become their emperor, Emmanuel or the emperor Bayezid; by this he was testing the opinion of the Byzantines with regard to himself. The Byzantines chose Emmanuel, since they were already tired of being ruled by Andronikos [IV]”.

⁵ Doukas, XIV.3: “the *demos* ... being agitated by divisions”.

⁶ Doukas, XIV.3: κατενώπιον πάντων τῶν ἀρίστων καὶ τοῦ δήμου; later, according to Doukas (XVIII.1), “Manuel was acclaimed as sole emperor by the palace and the *demos*”.

⁷ Chalkokondyles, Book VII, p. 141: ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ μεσιτῶν καὶ τοῦ δήμου καὶ τῶν μεσαζόντων, Καντακουζηνοῦ τε καὶ Νοταρᾶ.

⁸ *PP I*, 250: ἅπαντες (οἱ σεπτοὶ ἀδελφοί, ἡ σύγκλητος πᾶσα, τὸ βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἅπας τῶν Ῥωμαίων).

⁹ *Oeuvres complètes*, III, 177: ἐπὶ δὲ τὰς τοῦ δήμου ψήφους καταφυγόντος, ἄν ἐκ πολλοῦ τῷ δέει σεσαλευμένον εὐρῶν καὶ ταῖς λατινοφρόνων ὑποβολαῖς.

¹⁰ *Μανουὴλ Χρυσολοῦρᾶ Λόγος πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Μανουὴλ Β' Παλαιολόγο*, ed. Ch. G. Patrinelis and D.Z. Sophianos (Athens 2001), 62.

to have been summoned by the emperor himself. Already in 1347 John Kantakouzenos had called an assembly (ἐκκλησίαν) of the representatives of all social groups: the aristocrats, the ‘middle class’ (μέσους), the people (δῆμον) and the ecclesiastical authorities. This action has been seen by many historians as indicative of a tendency to broaden the base of imperial authority, because of the pressure exerted by the *mesoi*.¹¹ A century later, when the businessmen of Constantinople had further consolidated their political power, the calling of similar assemblies by the emperor was only to be expected. Scholarios’ proposal, which we have already referred to, that he should discuss the question of Union with the three classes of the city, the senate, the church and the citizen body (πολιτεία), was expressed in the framework of a current political procedure. A similar formulation is found in the speech *Concerning the rebuilding of the City* (*Περὶ τοῦ τῆς Πόλεως ἀνακτισματός*), which Joseph Bryennios composed to be “delivered in the same Palace, in the presence of [the emperor and] the Patriarch and those in rank and the clergy and the whole citizen body”.¹² We also have the *Final homilies* [of Mark Eugenikos] *in the presence of the Orthodox congregation and many of the senate and the citizens*.¹³ We do not, however, have any indication as to the exact composition of these assemblies, and above all we do not know, at least as far as the “citizens” are concerned, if and to what extent a system of ‘representation’ applied.¹⁴ However, we can consider it likely, on the basis of the few aforementioned indications, that it was not only the senators who took part in these assemblies, but also the wealthier of the other inhabitants who had some sort of political power. We pointed out in the last chapter that the people who are characterised as ‘civic officials’ (πολιτικοὶ ἄρχοντες) were rich businessmen, whose activity involved them in the daily economic

¹¹ Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 119.

¹² Ed. Tomadakis, “Ἰωσήφ τοῦ Βρυεννίου”, 243: εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ ρηθεῖσα παλάτιον, ἐπὶ παρουσίᾳ [...] τοῦ Πατριάρχου καὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει καὶ τοῦ κλήρου καὶ πάσης τῆς πολιτείας.

¹³ *PP I*, 35: Ἐπιτελεύτιοι ὁμιλῖαι ... παρουσίᾳ τῆς τῶν ὀρθοδόξων συνάξεως καὶ πολλῶν τῆς συγκλήτου καὶ τῆς πολιτείας.

¹⁴ Yet how otherwise are we to understand Bryennios’ words (ibid.) addressed “directly to you, the great ones, and through you to the whole people of the City”?

life of their fellow citizens, without gaining for them any other title than that of *oikeios*. If, as I suppose, there existed at Constantinople a functioning ‘city council’, which was formed by the so-called *politikoi archontes*, it is reasonable to connect this with some of the aforementioned assemblies. Besides, the information from Doukas and Chalkokondyles concerning collective decisions of the *demos* suggest that, apart from the assemblies called by the emperor, there were other gatherings of the ‘citizens’, perhaps on the initiative of the ‘civic officials’.

In any case, the assemblies we have mentioned, both those convened by the emperor and those which we believe were likely to have been called by the ‘city council’, signify an evolution of the political system in Byzantium. This evolution, for which we have only, as we have said, vague and minimal references, can be traced more clearly with the help of rhetorical sources.

B. Encomiastic and funerary orations.

From the period we are studying fourteen encomiastic or funerary orations have survived that were composed for the emperors of Constantinople, and speeches of a similar kind were composed for the despots of Mystras. In particular, we have three encomia for Manuel, three for John and two for Constantine Palaiologos, while there is one lament for John and three for Manuel. In addition, two texts of Demetrios and Manuel Chrysoloras respectively, although they do not have the formal structure of an encomium, could be considered to be in praise of the emperor Manuel on account of their content.

Imperial orations (βασιλικοί λόγοι) had a long history at the court of Constantinople from the earliest period, and they were composed according to the rules laid down by Menander.¹⁵ During the period under discussion, what deserves comment is not so much the

¹⁵ For encomiastic speeches in Byzantium, see Ninoslava Radošević, ‘The Emperor as Patron of Learning in Byzantine *Basilikoi Logoi*’, *TO ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΝ. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis Jr.*, I (New Rochelle NY 1993), 267–87.

composition of the orations in itself, but their quantity. Given the short space of time during which these particular pieces were written, they are strikingly numerous.¹⁶ The large number of texts is likely to be related to the state to which the intellectuals of Constantinople had been reduced at the end of the late period. I. Ševčenko observes that the intellectuals were poor, dependent on a poor emperor, and competing among themselves to see who could flatter him most.¹⁷ Indeed, it is probable that some of the speeches we possess were written in order simply to please the ruler and others were composed as a rhetorical exercises by their authors. Indicative is the speech that an unnamed pupil of Kalekas, mentioned by his teacher in a letter to the emperor Manuel: the learned emperor had pointed out many borrowings and commonplaces in this text, something that Kalekas denied.¹⁸ Typical of those orations that fit into a political routine and simply praise the emperor’s personal virtues is the encomium for Constantine Palaiologos by John Dokeianos, who piles up commonplaces and generalisations in a text that could have been written for any one of the last three emperors.¹⁹ The same spirit pervades the funeral oration composed, with liberal use of commonplaces, for Manuel Palaiologos by his friend Makarios Makres.

Yet besides these, there are speeches that had, in my opinion, direct political relevance and are teeming with more or less clear references to the current situation. Chortasmenos, for example, wrote his encomium for Manuel around 1409, when the emperor was in

¹⁶ For a general overview by period, see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche Literatur*, I, 128–145 and for a commented list of the funeral orations in this period, see A. Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden. Prosopographie, Datierung, Überlieferung* (Vienna 1994), 308ff.

¹⁷ I. Ševčenko, ‘Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century’, *Actes du XIV^e Congrès International d’Études Byzantines*, I (Bucharest 1974), 89–91 [= *Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium* (London 1981), no. I].

¹⁸ Kalekas, 222–3, 233–4.

¹⁹ *PP I*, 221–31. See the commentary by S. Trantari–Mara, ‘Οι πολιτικές απόψεις περί ηγεμόνος στον εγκωμιαστικό λόγο του Ιωάννου Δοκειανού για τον Κωνσταντίνου ΙΑ’ Παλαιολόγο’, *Πρακτικά του ΣΤ’ Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών*, II (Athens 2001–2002), 570–80, which, however, points out only the borrowings from ancient texts.

Thessaloniki in order to transfer the government of the city to the despot Andronikos Palaiologos, while John VIII substituted for him in Constantinople.²⁰

The composition of a relatively large number of rhetorical texts makes it clear that the last Palaiologoi, following tradition, used ‘court rhetoric’ as a means of propaganda for their actions. Thus, although the surviving encomia are composed of commonplaces and familiar rhetorical conventions, they express, even in their banality, elements of both the political practice and the political theory cultivated in the 15th century. One way or another, we need to look at texts of this kind as an expression of imperial ideology, always in the political context of each period. Since it goes without saying that imperial ideology did not remain unchanged throughout the centuries, court rhetoric, which served and/or expressed it, constitutes a precious source of indirect information on otherwise often imperceptible changes that happened from one period to the next.

As to their reception, encomia and funeral orations were as a rule composed in order to be read out before an audience.²¹ Manuel II himself composed a funeral oration for his brother Theodore, despot of the Peloponnese,²² which was read out to those present by Isidore of Kiev (who was still metropolitan of Monemvasia) in the cathedral at Mystras, after 1414.²³ The emperor had sent the speech to his friends, among them Manuel Chrysoloras, for review and comment.²⁴ Replying to his request, Chrysoloras composed a long

²⁰ Chortasmenos, 217–24. The chronology is proposed by Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 142–3, *contra* the editor of the text, who places it either in 1404–1408 or in 1414–1416.

²¹ Isidore of Kiev (*PP* III, 155) is concerned that his ‘listeners’ should not be tired by the extent of his speeches; Manuel Chrysoloras also speaks of his ‘hearers’ (*Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 75, 82).

²² Ed. J. Chrysostomides, *Manuel II Palaeologus, Funeral Oration on his brother Theodore* (Thessaloniki 1985) [hereafter *Funeral Oration*].

²³ It was originally dated to 1407 or 1409: see *Funeral Oration*, 29. However, Ch.Z. Patrinelis and D.Z. Sophianos (*Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 23) have shown that it must have been written about 1412 and delivered after 1414.

²⁴ See in this connection *Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 23.

text in which he went into the various themes touched on by the funeral oration and incidentally provides interesting information on the rationale for the composition of such works. He begins by pointing out that the emperor’s goal was to teach and inform his subjects: “What more humane and gentle words could be spoken to his subjects by a lord, who needed merely to command them? Either he did it for us, revealing his opinion to his subjects, or he thought that we could work with him for the common benefit, and in this way shows how important the welfare of the state is to him, pursuing its interests in every respect”.²⁵ Placing such speeches in a wider context, Chrysoloras later remarks that their aim was to exalt deeds that the listeners should imitate. In one aside, he makes the following statement: “This also in cities makes for good citizens, and this is why in well-governed cities, as I have said, it was ordained by the laws that encomia of good men should be publicly pronounced; in order that ... good citizens might thereby be formed ... well-intentioned and ready to do anything for the sake of their country”.²⁶

Chrysoloras’ comments prompt the observation that by systematically keeping his subjects informed, Manuel II was innovating, both because he let them know of his plans, and because he was asking their help. If we take literally the compliments of his friend and collaborator, we may suppose that Manuel had inaugurated a policy that became established with time, in addressing himself to what was probably a fairly broad audience. It is clear, in addition, that the paradigmatic character of the speeches, their preparation and delivery presuppose a dedicated gathering of people, whose exact composition, however,

²⁵ *Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 62: Τίνας ἂν ἔχοι τις φιλανθρωποτέρους καὶ ἡμερωτέρους λόγους εἰπεῖν δεσπότης πρὸς ὑπηκόους, ὃ γε ἥρκει καὶ προστάξει μόνον; ... Εἴτε γὰρ δι’ ἡμᾶς ἐπράττετο, τὴν ἐκείνου γνώμην πρὸς τοὺς ὑπηκόους παριστᾶ, εἴτε καὶ οἰομένου ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ τί πρὸς τὴν τῶν κοινῶν ὠφέλειαν συμπράξιν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δεικνύται ὅσος ἐκείνος περὶ τὰ κοινῆ συνοίσοντα, πάντοθεν τὴν αὐτῶν ὠφέλειαν θηρώμενος.

²⁶ *Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 69: Τοῦτο κἂν ταῖς πόλεσι πολίτας ἀγαθοὺς ποιεῖ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐν ταῖς εὐνομουμέναις, ὥσπερ εἶπον, ἐπὶ ταῖς ταφαῖς τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐγκώμια δημοσίᾳ λέγειν παρὰ τῶν νόμων ὄριστο· ὥς τε ... καὶ καλοὺς πολίτας διὰ τοῦτου γίγνεσθαι ... ἀγαθοὺς καὶ προθύμους δὲ πάντα ποιεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ...

eludes us. Thus although studying the texts in connection with the political situation of the period gives us an idea of their potential recipients, in reality there is no explicit information either on the social representativeness of the audience or on the venue for the delivery of these encomia.

As far as the venue is concerned, the few references in the written sources along with the topography of Constantinople rule out the open public spaces. It is most likely, therefore, that the audience gathered either in the palace²⁷ or in the great churches, and especially in Hagia Sophia. In any case, however, I think we have to connect the speeches reviewed by Chrysoloras with the calling of the assemblies mentioned earlier, and especially with those convoked by the emperor. Although the paradigms for “citizens” to which Chrysoloras refers were borrowed from classical antiquity, together with Doukas’ insistence on mentioning the *demos* of Constantinople at every opportunity they strengthen the supposition that the recipients of the encomiastic texts were the inhabitants of the City, who formed a body with a coherent political function.

As regards their authorship, it must be stressed at the outset that they were composed by men in the entourage of the last Palaiologoi. Specifically, the orations we are studying were written by John Argyropoulos,²⁸

²⁷ Scholarios delivered orations in the imperial palace, both when he was a monk and earlier, when he was in imperial service: see *Oeuvres complètes*, I, 288: “and how can I recall without weeping those audiences to whom I addressed the divine word as they were seated in the triklinos— the emperor, his brothers, the magnates, the bishops, the members of the clergy, the monks, the merchants, the townspeople, the foreigners?” Joseph Bryennios delivered his speech *On the rebuilding of the City* in the palace, while Mazaris mocks Asan for the orations that he pronounced in front of the emperor. Later, Scholarios delivered his famous speech in the otherwise unknown Palace of Xylalas. Argyropoulos too (Canivet–Oikonomides, 61) writes ironically of the speeches that Katablattas declaimed in the Palace. See also, subject to the reservation that this may be just a rhetorical convention, what John Argyropoulos writes at the beginning of his ‘consolatory’ speech to Constantine Palaiologos (*Αργυροπούλεια*, 9): “This place, this platform and the imperial chamber recall those years, in which, with the great emperor you both listened to others and were heard not without admiration”.

²⁸ Argyropoulos wrote a lament for John VIII (*PP* III, 313–19), an “imperial oration

John Dokeianos,²⁹ Isidore of Kiev, John Chortasmenos,³⁰ Bessarion,³¹ and Makarios Makres.³² We also have a funeral oration for Manuel, which was composed by an unknown young writer of theological inclinations.³³ All the authors of the texts that concern us agree in praising and recognising the merits of the emperor they were addressing, even though there is differentiation in their views and their style. Besides, given the social role of Byzantine intellectuals,³⁴ and according to the degree of their involvement in the realisation of imperial policy, it seems as if the authors of these texts were performing an official service, having undertaken to support or to propagate imperial policy in one way or another.

To give a fuller picture of what has just been said, I shall attempt to analyse the encomium that Isidore of Kiev wrote between 1423 and 1427 for the emperors Manuel and John Palaiologos.³⁵ Isidore had an interesting career: he was a hieromonk, he became metropolitan of Monemvasia with Manuel’s approval and, later, abbot of the imperial monastery of St Demetrios. He took part in the Council of Florence as

or oration on Kingship to the emperor Constantine Palaiologos” (*Αργυροπούλεια*, 29–47), and a speech entitled “Consolation to the emperor Constantine arriving from the Peloponnese and receiving the sceptre from John on his decease” (*Αργυροπούλεια*, 8–28).

²⁹ Apart from the oration already referred to, he wrote an “address” to Constantine Palaiologos (*PP* I, 232–5).

³⁰ Chortasmenos, 217–24; see also n. 20 above.

³¹ *PP* III, 284–90: ‘Lament for Kyr Manuel Palaiologos’.

³² A. Sideras, *25 ανέκδοτοι βυζαντινοί επιτάφιοι* (Thessaloniki 1991), 301–7.

³³ Ch. Dendrinos, ‘An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Manuel II Paleologus (1425)’, *Porphyrogenita. Essays on the History of Byzantium and the Latin East in Honour of Julian Chrysostomides*, ed. Ch. Dendrinos et al. (London 2003), 423–50.

³⁴ Ševčenko, ‘Society and Intellectual Life’, 83ff. More recently, see D. Kyritsis, “Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και το τέλος του βυζαντινού πολιτισμού”, *1453. Η άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση από τους μεσαιωνικούς στους νεώτερους χρόνους*, 161–72.

³⁵ *PP* III, 132–99. For commentary, see Oliver Jens Schmitt, ‘Kaiserrede und Zeitgeschichte im späten Byzanz: Ein Panegyrikos Isidors von Kiew aus dem Jahre 1429’, *JÖB* 48 (1998), 209–42. Schmitt points out that Isidore does not strictly follow Menander’s rules of rhetorical composition, and considers that the work falls between rhetoric and historiography.

Metropolitan of Kiev; immediately afterwards (8 December 1439) he became a cardinal and was appointed papal legate in Russia. In 1443 he returned to Italy where the pope put him in charge of questions concerning the relationship of the two Churches. It was Isidore who proclaimed the Union of the Churches at the festal liturgy in Hagia Sophia of 12 December 1452. His relations with the imperial family explain why his text, the longest of all the orations under review, is essentially a justification of imperial policy, and mainly of John VIII's policy in all sectors. He gives the impression of replying to accusations that Manuel and John had received on account of their political choices.

The oration begins with an extensive description of Constantinople, with a view to showing that the efforts of the two emperors to protect it were proportional to its greatness and importance. The same logic lies behind the praise for their initiatives in repairing the walls and the harbour of the City. In the author's perception, the aim that the two emperors pursued with absolute consistency was the preservation of Constantinople, not so much as a symbol of imperial tradition, but rather as being territorially identical with their jurisdiction. For this reason, even the victories that Manuel gained in Thessaloniki and the Peloponnese, although undoubtedly noteworthy in themselves, had more weight insofar as they guaranteed the security of the City.

Isidore then highlights the decisive Byzantine participation in the crusade of Sigismund, who, when he was defeated at the battle of Nikopolis, was obliged to recognise Manuel's military wisdom. At the same time, he celebrates the emperor's initiative in confronting Bayezid's siege from the sea with the help of the western fleet. A large part of the oration is taken up with the description of John Palaiologos' successes in Messenia and Eleia in 1417, successes that aimed at the "improvement and growth of the empire (ἐπίδοσιν τῆς βασιλείας καὶ τὴν αὐξησιν)" in the Peloponnese. The attempts to terminate the Frankish state of the Morea are described at length, while it is especially emphasised that the emperor, with his presence, aimed at taking the local aristocracy by surprise.³⁶ The emperors' military

³⁶ PP III, 174: "he arrived in the land of Pelops, with none of the local men of rank knowing anything of what he had in mind."

achievements in resisting the Turks are also mentioned. Among other things, Isidore talks about the siege of Constantinople in 1422, in which, according to him, John VIII yet again distinguished himself by his military virtue and bravery.

There follows an extensive chapter on the emperors' administrative qualities. Revealingly, on a first reading of the text it is not at all evident which of the two emperors is being discussed. The reader suspects that Isidore is deliberately obfuscating matters in order to demonstrate the qualities of both the individuals being praised, and, in general, of the person who wielded imperial authority. We have referred several times to the difficulties that Manuel encountered before he finally established himself on the throne,³⁷ and we have also had occasion to allude to the way in which the question of dynastic legitimacy always remained open because of the conflict that was brewing among his sons. In these circumstances, Isidore's deliberate lack of clear identification, and the advice to John VIII with which he concludes his encomium, were evidently aimed at confirming the legitimacy of the succession not only by blood, but mainly by deeds.³⁸

The virtues that an emperor was supposed to have are discussed elsewhere in this study. Here, since we are trying to understand the purpose and the recipients of the encomia and funeral orations, we should proceed to the next section of Isidore's oration, which refers to internal policy. Overall, what the future metropolitan of Kiev tries to convince his audience of is the smooth and effective functioning of the state. He insists particularly on the fiscal policy of the emperor, saying: "you leave none of the well born, but also none of lowly condition, uncared and unprovided for, but gathering those who come from all over the earth, like a gentle and caring father, you take care of all, giving all a share in the treasury of yearly pensions and taxes, sharing all things among all men; removing the excesses and deficiencies from

³⁷ See how Doukas, XIV.3, describes the reaction of the City's inhabitants to Manuel.

³⁸ The need to emphasise and secure dynastic legitimacy recurs in other orations, as also in Manuel's *Precepts* (Υποθήκαι): see for example PP III, 176, and Chortasmenos, 222. On this point, Chortasmenos' oration is discussed by Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 143.

the ends, you fill out and top up the middle”.³⁹ In the context of an encomium, the emperor’s sense of justice towards all his subjects is naturally promoted as one of his basic virtues. However, one might read this particular passage as an apology for the economic policy of the two Palaiologoi, in response to accusations of an excessive increase in taxation. On first sight, any increase in taxes would certainly have been onerous in the conditions of great deprivation experienced by the inhabitants of the City, and Isidore would thus have wanted to reassure them. The extra tax on the consumption of wine, for example, which John VIII planned in 1423 to impose both on his subjects and on the Venetians would undoubtedly have hit the weaker classes of urban society. In our text it is not specified exactly what taxation is meant, but perhaps it was the new taxes which, as is mentioned in another encomium by Isidore for John, had been levied for the repair of the Kontoskalion harbour.⁴⁰ This second text also mentions that in the repair of the harbour, all the inhabitants worked for payment, “apart from a few, who supervised the mass of workers. They were the notables, appointed by the emperor”.⁴¹ Although not stated explicitly, it is most likely that the *prokritoi* bore the financial burden of the works, and therefore I suggest that it was these people whom Isidore wanted to persuade of the necessity and the justice of the emperor’s fiscal policy. Finally, it is interesting that Manuel is praised for his care in appointing impartial and judges who were not open to bribery. This reminds us of the contradictory image of the corrupt judge Katablattas, which Argyropoulos paints in dark hues, or Mazaris’ comments on the honest judges who were missing in the upper world and whom he met only in Hades.⁴²

³⁹ Οὐδένα τῶν εὖ γεγονότων, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῆς κάτω τάχα τύχης ἀπρονόητον ἕας καὶ ἀτημέλητον, ἀλλὰ τοὺς ὅπουδῆποτε προσερρηκότας συναγαγῶν γῆς, οἷά τις πατὴρ ἦπιος καὶ κηδεμονικός καὶ περὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀθροίσας πάντων προνοῆ καὶ κοινὸν ἀναδείκνυς τὸ τῶν διετησίων συντάξων καὶ φόρων ἄθροισμα ταμίειον, καὶ μερίζεις πάντα τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀναλόγως, τὰς ὑπερβολὰς καὶ τὰς ἐλλείψεις ὑπεξερύσας, τὸ ἐκατέρων ὑπερβάλλον τῶν ἄκρων κεράσας τῇ μεσότητι καὶ ἀναπληρώσας.

⁴⁰ PP III, 298.

⁴¹ πλὴν ἐνίων, καὶ τούτων τοῦ πλήθους ἐπιστατούντων. Οἱ δὲ ἦσαν οἱ πρόκριτοι, διατεταγμένοι παρὰ βασιλέως.

⁴² Mazaris, 16.

We said earlier that Isidore’s speech praises both emperors; comparatively, however, the greater part of the text refers to John VIII. Thus it may usefully be compared with Isidore’s other encomium addressed only to John.⁴³

This encomium also talks about the strong walls of Constantinople and comments on the naval battle at Echinades in 1427. Once again the emperor’s military effectiveness is emphasised, as well as his care for the fortification of the city. Also singled out for special mention is his “pious zeal (ὕπερ εὐσεβείας ζῆλος)” for the “union of our faith and orthodox doctrine (τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς πίστεως καὶ τῶν ὁρθῶν δογμάτων)”. After this, there is an extensive analysis of John’s role in the Venetian–Genoese conflict. If the first oration we looked at was an encomium and defence of John VIII’s internal policy and military competence, the second is an encomium of his diplomatic policy, and especially of his handling of relations with Venice and Genoa. The emperor is presented as having played the role at least of an impartial arbiter when the conflict spread beyond Pera; he is said to have been treated with respect both by the Venetians and by the Genoese, and to have carried so much weight that the Venetians were forced to abandon the war. Evidently Isidore is referring to the conflict that broke out when the Venetians, as opponents of the Visconti masters of Genoa, seized Chios. The aristocracy of the island then asked for aid from the Turks, while Visconti asked John VIII to help him by attacking Crete and other Venetian possessions in the Aegean (1431). John did not take up the invitation; he merely made fruitless efforts to reconcile the antagonists. Finally, the Venetians were defeated in 1432 and withdrew from Chios.⁴⁴

As a kind of justification, Isidore’s second encomium is addressed to those who thought that Byzantium had been bought by the Westerners and/or doubted its negotiating strength with regard to the Italian cities. The anti–unionists must surely have expressed such worries, in addition to wondering to what extent the emperor, who governed with

⁴³ PP III, 292–308.

⁴⁴ For the narrative of these events with reference to the sources, see Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 266ff.

justice, piety and mercy, “the one holding the reins of the empire of the Romans”, was still “the regent of our faith”.⁴⁵ In this particular situation, however, the author’s insistence on John’s diplomatic capabilities was also addressed, I think, to those *archontes* or businessmen who had relations with the Genoese and would certainly have incurred the latter’s displeasure because of the emperor’s unwillingness to further Visconti’s plans.

Besides, the fact that both in these encomia and in Argyropoulos’ lament for John VIII,⁴⁶ as well as the other rhetorical texts we are examining, the author attaches great importance to the military capabilities and effectiveness of the two emperors, is likely to be an echo of a difference of opinion over the best policy to follow with regard to the Turks. More generally, however, the emphasis on the ruler’s military capability, although it constitutes yet another encomiastic topos, is mainly bound up with the need to define the territorial sovereignty of the late Palaiologan state. This need obviously arose on account of the Turkish threat, but it became imperative because Constantinople was the prize at stake in the internal dynastic struggles, first between Manuel II and John VII, and then between John VIII and his brothers.

In such a situation, the rhetorical orations we are discussing were not addressed only to the enemies, but also and primarily, to the supporters of the Palaiologoi. They aimed, that is, in my opinion, at maintaining the cohesion of the pro-western ‘party’, a cohesion which was threatened by the accusations of its opponents. The clearest accusation may have come from the partisans of the anti-union faction,⁴⁷ but it appears that both Manuel and John also faced criticism over the effectiveness of their foreign policy from the men who supported them. Indeed, where John is concerned the encomia for

⁴⁵ *PP* III, 313: ὁ τὰς ἡνίας κατέχων τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλείας ... ὁ ἔξαρχος τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς πίστεως.

⁴⁶ *PP* III, 313.

⁴⁷ The fact that Joseph Bryennios (Tomadakis, 249) criticises his rich fellow citizens because, instead of repairing the walls, they spend their money on building luxurious houses shows, among other things, that there was disagreement even over the right defence policy to follow.

him may be read as the answer of the ‘war party’, which he headed, to those who supported his father’s more moderate policy. Consequently, we can understand these particular texts as a policy justification at a time when the especially unstable conditions favoured constant changing from one political camp to another,⁴⁸ moreover, we can discern in their content the tactics adopted by the emperors in order to implement their policy as irrefragably as possible.

What we have said so far gives clearer meaning to Chrysoloras’ statement in praise of Manuel for communicating his decisions to his subjects; in short, it shows that the last Palaiologoi encouraged in their way the assemblies of the important inhabitants of Constantinople, from which they hoped to derive legitimacy. The quantity of encomia and funeral orations that we noted at the beginning of this chapter is clearly related to this tactic, which, consequently, was addressed not only to the senators, but also to the leaders of the vaguely defined *demos* referred to in the texts.

Although the funeral orations were driven by the same dynastic tactic of political survival, and assumed the same participating audiences of imperial subjects, they also had, I believe, another dimension in that they served as a ritual for the symbolic and political transition from one emperor to another. Manuel II’s initiative, lauded by Manuel Chrysoloras, in writing a funeral oration for his brother, the despot of the Peloponnese, shows precisely the purpose that underlay the composition of such speeches on deceased rulers. Manuel insists especially on Theodore’s decision to hand over the towns of the Peloponnese to the Knights Hospitaller of Rhodes, as well as his attempts at compromise with the Turks; he insists, that is, on those aspects of policy in which Theodore found himself at odds with the

⁴⁸ See Schreiner, *Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, I, 99: “in the same year [1448] ... died the despot Theodore Palaiologos, brother of the emperor John. And not a few were secretly disloyal, while the following were openly disaffected: Theodore Palaiologos, Bryennios Leontares Palaiologos, Segroula, Skantzilieres Strategopoulos, the judge, the secretary, and many others”. I see the declaration of loyalty signed by Manuel Tarchaneiotes Boullotes as an indication of the mutable loyalties of the *archontes* that the emperor wanted to anticipate: see the text of the declaration edited by Laurent, ‘La profession de foi’, 68–9.

old aristocratic families of the region, like that of Mamonas. With his intervention Manuel aimed not so much to validate his brother's policy, with which he actually disagreed, as to restore the damaged authority of the dynasty and to ensure its continuation at Mystras.

The laments that were written for Manuel himself had the similar aim of legitimising the emperor's reign, and, above all, legitimising his successor, at a time when the internal dynastic struggles between his sons were intensifying. The only surviving lament for John VIII,⁴⁹ written by John Argyropoulos, showed essentially that Manuel's successor had continued his father's work. Finally, the same need for legitimacy was served by the funeral orations for the emperors' wives.⁵⁰ In these cases, however, the search for legitimacy was not solely concerned with the exercise of power by the emperors alone, but also, I believe, with the active role of the women in question, like Helen Dragases, in the formation of Palaiologan policy.

At this point, I should reiterate that the rhetorical texts we are concerned with do not represent an innovation of this period. The Byzantine court always required, as an integral part of its ceremonial, encomia and funeral orations for the emperor and his family. But at no time did these texts simply constitute a synthesis of repeated, neutral *topoi*. To be exact, even their commonplaces had a political function that was necessary to the existing political system. The preceding analysis of the rhetorical texts showed that, in the 15th century as always, their purpose was closely bound up with the political circumstances of the time. It has also demonstrated, I believe, that the proliferation of such texts at the time was not accidental; on the contrary, their relatively great number must be attributed to the fact that texts of this kind that made immediate reference to current events were useful in a political system which required the participation not only of the *archontes* but also of the *demos*. For the emperors used these texts to address their subjects, both their opponents and, mainly, their supporters, whom they wanted to

⁴⁹ The fact that only one has survived is probably related to the loss of reputation that John VIII suffered on account of his unionist policy, as a result of which the prescribed ritual was not observed at his funeral: see Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 381–2.

⁵⁰ For these texts, see the list in Sideras, *Die byzantinischen Grabreden*, 454–5.

persuade of the correctness of their political choices. From this point of view, the composition and the content of such texts are indirect but reliable indicators for the calling of quite broadly-based assemblies. It remains to see what insight the texts afford into the emperor's role and his exercise of power.

C. The emperor

The institutional role of the emperor was never questioned in Byzantium⁵¹. Theoretically, the 'emperor of the Romans' remained until the end the head of state and the source of all power. In practice, however, his position progressively weakened during the Palaiologan period, through the growing strength of the landowning aristocracy and the separatist tendencies exhibited by their representatives. Yet by the 15th century, the landowning aristocracy had become reduced and, as we have noted several times, had fused with those who were formerly termed the 'middle class' (*μέσοι*). The emperors were now surrounded by an élite, whose political and economic interests were tied to Constantinople and who needed him in order to survive. His position was strengthened in consequence, and there was no question of his role as the bearer of power being challenged by the new ruling stratum of Byzantine society.

Byzantium, however, had to face the danger of the Turks; complex diplomatic manoeuvres were required to secure alliances and aid, but also necessary was the constant reassurance that the Byzantine ruler still kept his authority. Up to the Fall, the Palaiologoi made manifest efforts to project their leadership role in their contacts with foreign rulers, even if only on a symbolic level.⁵² Quite apart

⁵¹ The basic work is G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest. The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, tr. J. Birrell (Cambridge 2003).

⁵² Worth noting is the miniature that decorates the manuscript of the works of Dionysios the Areopagite that Manuel II sent as a gift to the abbey of Saint-Denis in Paris (see Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 265–6). In the manuscript, which according to the dedicatory colophon was brought by Manuel Chrysoloras, Manuel was portrayed in the insignia of power, along with his wife Helen Dragases and his three sons John, Theodore and Andronikos.

from John's requests, when he went to Italy, to be treated with the honours appropriate to his rank,⁵³ it is not without significance that he attended the Council in person, even though the Pope had informed him that his presence was not necessary.⁵⁴ Certainly, John's decision personally to take part in the Union discussions was related to the importance he attached to the Council, but it was also driven by the need to emphasise his role as head of the Church, a role that his father too had affirmed in the Council of 1409.⁵⁵

The emperor's relations with the church have been a constant theme throughout this study. We are now, I think, in a position to make some more general observations. First of all, it is certain that both Church and State each sought independence from the other, insofar as the subjection of one by the other was not feasible.⁵⁶ The issue was not formally raised and both sides called upon each other's collaboration,⁵⁷ which actually happened between individuals,⁵⁸ either because they were bound by personal friendship or for tactical reasons. In reality, however, the rift had occurred. The ideological entrenchment of the dominant hesychast party in the Patriarchate had encouraged it on the one hand, and so, on the other, had the personal and political overtures to the West by the last Palaiologoi. Manuel's schooling by Kydones had made him, in the eyes of his teacher's adversaries, an easy prey to western

⁵³ Syropoulos, 216, 242, 322, 328.

⁵⁴ Syropoulos, 114: "I have no need of the emperor".

⁵⁵ Laurent, 'Le trisépiscopat', 55, 89–96, 135–7.

⁵⁶ See the characteristic remark of Manuel Palaiologos when he sought confirmation of the privileges that had been accorded to John V, before the election of the new patriarch (Syropoulos, 102): "It is best that all pertinent rights should be established beforehand, so that both the empire and the Church may be aware of their respective rights by peaceful accord, and the patriarch-elect may know from the start what belongs to him and what to the emperor".

⁵⁷ See the words of John Eugenikos (PPI, 178) in 1452: "thus the Church alone cannot accomplish anything noble and finished, if the secular power does not cooperate".

⁵⁸ Blanchet, 'L'Église byzantine', 86–7, 118, demonstrates that Mark Eugenikos at the Council of Florence enjoyed the respect and protection of John VIII, even though he was the most fanatical enemy of the Union.

influence, although he himself dealt moderately with the Union issue.⁵⁹ Manuel nevertheless, as is clear from the way in which, in 1403, he restored to the patriarchal throne Matthew, the incumbent who had been deposed by John VII, did not want to lose control of the situation to the *offikialioi* of the Patriarchate, both for political reasons and because he disagreed with them over theological questions. John acknowledged that he did not have a voice in matters of doctrine, but he proclaimed that he was, by virtue of his position, the *defensor* of the Church,⁶⁰ and that his duty was to protect it by whatever means he judged opportune. It is also a fact that not one of the last Palaiologoi yielded to the pressures exerted by the *offikialioi*; whenever he encountered their opposition, he either tried to get round it by soothing them, or he simply ignored it, in order to secure the aid he requested from the West. Besides, it is interesting that John ultimately did not take into consideration even the opinion of his powerful mother, Helen Dragases, who was always expressing her anti-Unionist views along with various allies.⁶¹ Although when John returned from Italy, he decided, for reasons that are unclear, not to apply the decree of Union, he was at least until the moment he signed convinced of the necessity and the possibility of Union; this is why he confronted the *offikialioi* with a sense of superiority, and sometimes with contempt, as we learn from Syropoulos' account.

I believe that this situation of an increasing stand-off, which finally took the form of a conflict between the two powers of Church and State, led to the position of emperor acquiring a more secular character. Of course, there are no theoretical texts to document this gradual transformation in the exercise of imperial power. However, we can trace it through scattered references in the sources relating to the

⁵⁹ Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 320ff.

⁶⁰ Syropoulos, 400, citing the emperor's speech to the clerics who took part in the Council of Florence: "It seems to me that the duty of the *defensor* ... is twofold: first, to preserve and defend the doctrines of the Church and to provide freedom of speech to those who wish to speak on their behalf ...; second, to hold together and preserve all who are ours in concord, that all may agree in one will and one mind".

⁶¹ Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 271–4.

emperor's institutional role. In the following pages, we will see that among the imperial virtues, what is now highlighted is not so much his power by the grace of God, but his care for the common good that derives from his education and moral qualities. Moreover, within the framework created by the relations of the last Palaiologoi with the Patriarchate, it seems that, with time, the ritual of coronation was losing its obligatory character. Of the three last emperors, Constantine in the end was never crowned, despite occasional hypotheses to the contrary.⁶² But even Manuel II, when he was finally crowned in Hagia Sophia in 1392, had already ruled for about a year after his father's death.⁶³ I. Djurić relates this fact to the dynastic struggles at the end of the 14th century,⁶⁴ but in the context in which we are examining it here, it shows that the authorising role of the Church in the procedure for the acclamation of a new emperor had substantially weakened. That role had never previously been in doubt.

For the purposes of our analysis, it is also important to examine whether the new political conditions and social realities, in which the *archontes* and the entrepreneurs of Constantinople were dominant, affected the exercise of imperial power.

In his *Chronicle*, Sphrantzes describes a scene involving Manuel II, already very ill, and John Palaiologos. The old emperor was trying, without success, to persuade his successor to follow a moderate policy. He then turned to the author of the *Chronicle*, who was present, and said to

⁶² Sphrantzes, 102: “and they made the despot Kyr Konstantinos emperor at Mystras”; see most recently, K.G. Pitsakis, ‘Και πάλι για την ‘Στέψη’ του Κωνσταντίνου ΙΑ’ Παλαιολόγου’, *Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου Η συμβολή του Sir Steven Runciman στην ανάδειξη του Βυζαντινού Πολιτισμού, Μυστράς 27 και 28 Μαΐου 2001*, ed. Ch.P. Baloglou (Athens–Mystras 2005), 145–65, with earlier bibliography. Pitsakis maintains that the coronation of Constantine would have been impossible in Mystras in the absence of a patriarch, and that it could not have happened in Constantinople either, where passions would have been inflamed by the presence of the unionist patriarch Gregory Mammes.

⁶³ Manuel's coronation, which took place at the same time as his marriage to Helen Dragases, is described by Ignatius of Smolensk (see Majeska, *Russian Travelers*, 416ff).

⁶⁴ Djurić, *Le crépuscule*, 135ff, 199ff.

him, “My son is the right emperor, but not for the present time. For he sees big and thinks big, in ways for which the times would require the prosperity of our ancestors. But today ... what our government needs is not an emperor but a manager.”⁶⁵

The difference between an emperor and a manager raises questions, especially when it is said to have been formulated by the emperor himself. The term *oikonomos* designates a steward and/or an administrator, but in Byzantine political and ecclesiastical practice, the word *oikonomia* also acquired the sense of bending the rules to adapt to the needs of the moment.⁶⁶ K.–P. Matschke considers that these needs were primarily economic and he links Manuel's statement to the administration of public finances, which were in a bad state.⁶⁷ However, I think that the term *oikonomos*, in the sense in which Manuel uses it, goes beyond the financial sphere, and that we should place it in the political field for it to become more meaningful. I believe, that is, that in Manuel's perception the difference between the emperor and the manager lies in the degree of independence enjoyed by each of them in the realisation of his decisions; in other words, what the *oikonomos* lacked was the absolute power of the *basileus*. It was the difference between the owner and the manager of a commercial enterprise.

The context of Manuel's observation reveals exactly, in my opinion, the limited possibilities that were open to John. Just previously, the father had advised the son not to proceed with Union, because he did not consider, as he said, “our people to be capable of finding any

⁶⁵ Sphrantzes, 82: ὁ υἱός μου ἐνὶ μὲν ἀρμόδιος βασιλεὺς, οὐ τοῦ παρόντος δὲ καιροῦ. Βλέπει γὰρ καὶ φρονεῖ μεγάλα καὶ τοιαῦτα, οἷα οἱ καιροὶ ἐχρηζον τῆς εὐημερίας τῶν προγόνων ἡμῶν. Ἀμὴ σήμερον ... οὐ βασιλεῖα θέλει ἡ ἡμῶν ἀρχή, ἀλλ' οἰκονόμον.

⁶⁶ G. Dagron, ‘La règle et l'exception. Analyse de la notion de l'économie’, *Religieuse Devianz. Untersuchungen zu sozialen, rechtlichen und theologischen Reaktionen auf religiöse Abweichung im westlichen und östlichen Mittelalter*, ed. D. Simon (Frankfurt 1990), 17.

⁶⁷ K.–P. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz. Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Geschichte zwischen 1402 und 1422* (Weimar 1981), 220ff.

means of unity peace and concord”⁶⁸; however, he had recommended keeping the question open in order to put pressure on the Turks. This recognition of the limited possibilities available to the Byzantines was symptomatic of the political realism that distinguished Manuel, while the moderation that he advocated in dealing with both the Turks and the Latins stemmed from an appreciation of the position in which Byzantium found itself. In this transformed political situation, therefore, I would give the word *oikonomos*, which Manuel uses in the sense of ‘manager’, the nuance of flexibility, and I would question whether this search for flexibility concerned external relations alone. At first sight, and according to the old emperor’s own words, it was the Turks who prevented John from pursuing his policy. However, it is likely flexibility was also needed in the political changes that had come about, most important of which was the participation of the *archontes*, and above all of the *politeia*, in the decision-making process. The new factor that limited imperial omnipotence was the ‘people’ of Constantinople, which had the power to decide on peace or war with the Turks. The widening of the social base, on which the ruler had to establish his power, meant that he had to strike new balances. He could not, consequently, ignore the *demos* and neglect to seek their approval. Is this not what Chrysoloras is getting at when he praises Manuel for seeking the opinion of his subjects?

In the City that was looking for ways to survive, the emperor stood out as the central figure in political life, with the characteristics of the kind and realistic ruler, who did not shed any of his responsibilities and always took care to have the last word.⁶⁹ In reality, however, his role was that of moderator of the decisions taken by the two councils – that of his own entourage, and that of the City. The well-behaved emperor was, in the end, just one of the *archontes*; his final fate was that of Constantine Palaiologos, whose dead body was barely recognisable up on the walls of the fallen city.

⁶⁸ Sphrantzes, 82

⁶⁹ The image of the kind, accessible and realistic ruler is portrayed throughout the whole narrative of Sphrantzes. A similar sense of immediacy is conveyed by some of the travellers, like Clavijo, tr. Le Strange, 61.

D. The ruler’s virtues

The text that most clearly enumerates and describes the ruler’s virtues is that entitled ‘Recommendations for imperial upbringing’, which Manuel composed for his son John.⁷⁰ Literary scholars have classed it in the rhetorical genre that includes the so-called ‘mirrors of princes’, a genre whose revival in Byzantium has been attributed to the influence of the classical tradition in all periods.⁷¹ However, without underestimating this influence, I think that the texts in question – and this goes for the encomia and funeral orations as well – had a particular political purpose on each occasion; in other words, I believe that they were not simply the result of their authors’ philological interests, but that they were connected to particular political functions, which we should now investigate.

Where the text of Manuel II’s exhortations is concerned, it is helpful to divide this into two parts. In the first (chapters 1–50), the father gives his son advice on his moral edification and Christian conduct. In this section, the most interesting piece of advice concerns John’s relations with the Church, and his obligation, as a believer, to respect its doctrine.⁷² In John’s prospective accession to the throne, the requisite respect would have, as its long-term consequence, a moderate policy towards the Church, a policy that Manuel himself supported as emperor.⁷³

The second part of the text (chapters 51–100) concerns the government of the state. According to Manuel, as befitted a student of Kydones,

⁷⁰ PG 156, cols. 320–84.

⁷¹ For *Fürstenspiegel* literature in Byzantium, see Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche Literatur I*, 157–165 and bibliography; for Manuel’s text, see especially pp. 164–165; and for an extensive analysis, see the recent study by K. Païdas, *Τα βυζαντινά κάτοπτρα ηγεμόνος της ύστερης περιόδου (1245–1403). Εκφράσεις του βυζαντινού βασιλικού ιδεώδους* (Athens 2006). However, Païdas considers the text from the point of view of unchanging Byzantine political theory.

⁷² PG 156, col. 325: “You must put before all things the Church that treats you above all men, and is everything to you after God ... To fight the Church’s teachings is to kick against the pricks”.

⁷³ See his remarks to John according to Sphrantzes, 82: “Regarding the Council, keep discussing it and raising the issue, especially when you need to scare the infidels”.

the emperor was mortal and the only thing that he had over and above other men was his role (σκήμα). He was a legislator and judge, but ought to be, above all, a legislator and judge of his own affairs (col. 352). He should also take care for peace to prevail among his subjects, and to keep things intact even in circumstances that were leading to disaster (cols. 353, 368). As a proper ruler, John should be characterised by prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance, love and moderation (col. 365). He should also have the qualities of dignity and magnificence (col. 372). At the same time, Manuel thought that the emperor's primary goal should be the acquisition of wisdom and learning,⁷⁴ which would allow him to live 'lawfully' (ἐννόμως) and to care for the common good.⁷⁵ The image of the educated ruler was also, as we know, the one that Manuel projected of himself.⁷⁶ This image, however, does not interest us here as the result of Manuel's personal inclination for learning, but as a political choice, precisely because education, which he advised his son to acquire, shaped the philosopher-king that Manuel projected as a model (cols. 353, 373).

The same virtues characterise the emperor in the encomiastic and funeral orations that we referred to previously.⁷⁷ The intellectuals' need to convince the recipients of their texts of the rightness of the

⁷⁴ Cols. 352–3, 365: "A wreath ... of bodily strength artfully woven with wisdom ... For wisdom is good not only for the wise, but for those who make it. Since ruling and being a private citizen are two distinct things, and each of them is divided into good and bad qualities, the combination is desirable if it consists of both ruling and ruling well". See also col. 369: "It is very harmful for the state when the rulers' mind is dissipated".

⁷⁵ Col. 373: "The emperor who lives lawfully ... who thinks that his interest lies in that of the community, who serves Christ and imitates him in serving rather than ruling, takes pleasure in improving his rule over those whose lot has been improved". On care for the common good, see cols. 345, 377. See also Chortasmenos, 220.

⁷⁶ See Dennis, *Letters*, nos. 3, 5, 6, 11, 52, 54. Kalekas, 200, praises Manuel for his culture. For general comment on the emperor's education and writings, see Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus*, 395ff.

⁷⁷ See, by way of illustration, the epilogue to Isidore of Kiev's oration (*PP* III, 199): "And be to all an emperor who is provident, gentle, mild, merciful, thoughtful, well-advised, protective, a kind father to all, having concern for each one of your subjects".

policy pursued by the emperors being praised required systematic insistence on their qualities as rulers. Thus, for example, John is praised generally as just, compassionate and brave, but mainly as wise,⁷⁸ while John Argyropoulos, in his lament, highlights wisdom and education as John's special qualities.⁷⁹ I would say that on reading the texts addressed to John VIII in particular, one has the impression, without of course being able to prove it, that they were composed as a response or rather as proof that he was putting his father's advice into effect. It is revealing, for example, how much Isidore's praise for John's upbringing and education matches the content of Manuel's 'Recommendations'.⁸⁰ The affinity of the encomia with Manuel's "Recommendations" provides, in my opinion, yet another indication that these texts echo the political ideas that were being cultivated in the court of Constantinople and were aimed at disseminating them as widely as possible. I maintain, that is, that even in those cases where the speeches do not constitute an apology for particular aspects of imperial policy, but consist of commonplaces about an emperor's virtues, although these commonplaces may be drawn from a pre-existing stock, they are chosen and promoted in relation to the political needs of the moment.

What we notice immediately in both the orations and the "Recommendations" is that the emperor has the same qualities that he had always had: he was the father of his subjects, compassionate, just and pious, dignified and imposing. He was also effective in the military sector and brave. Mainly, however, he was wise and educated, and he differed from a tyrant in his manner of government.

The distinction between emperor and tyrant was not new in fifteenth-century Byzantium; the emperor had always been a 'lawful dominion' (ἐννομος ἐπιστασία), who legislated but was himself subject to the laws he issued. Correspondingly, the other moral qualities that are promoted in the encomiastic orations and in Manuel's exhortations

⁷⁸ See also Chortasmenos, 218: "Your struggle, O emperor, is one of pure wisdom, and deprived of all human assistance".

⁷⁹ *PP* III, 317.

⁸⁰ *PP* III, 169–71.

are based on the long tradition of the imperial institution, as it had been shaped by the principles of Roman Law and Christian theory. Furthermore, the two qualities that are especially emphasised at this time, those of the educated emperor and of the good soldier, go back to the early period and turn up in almost all imperial orations.⁸¹ The Platonic philosopher-king as the incarnation of virtue already occurs from the 13th century, when Nikephoros Blemmydes had articulated the demand for ‘philosophy’ to contribute to the exercise of power, a demand that is repeated throughout the whole of the 14th century.

In general, it is difficult to find ‘innovative’ elements in the model of the emperor that is revealed in the 15th-century texts. Even if it had been part of their intention to exalt any new orientations taken by the emperors they were praising, the intellectuals would still have emphasised the emperor’s traditional virtues, given that conflict between opposing political factions was always ready to erupt. Moreover, in Blemmydes’ case, it has been suggested that his insistence on the model of the philosopher-king aimed at strengthening his own position as an intellectual at the court of Nicaea.⁸² It would therefore be reasonable to argue, following Ševčenko, that the intellectuals in the entourage of Manuel II and John VIII had similar ambitions.⁸³ Besides, we saw at the beginning of this section examples of speeches that either did not please Manuel or consisted of citations of commonplaces.

However, it is self-evident that the speeches were not composed in a vacuum, as we showed in our detailed comments in earlier pages,

⁸¹ Radosević, ‘The Emperor as the Patron of Learning in Byzantine *Basilikoi Logoi*’. For the significance of the emperor’s military competence in our period, see above p. 120, 123.

⁸² P. Gounaridis, *Pratique politique et discours politique dans l’État de Nicée (1204–1261)*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université de Paris I–Panthéon-Sorbonne 1984, 186; see pp. 179ff for general analysis of Blemmydes’ views on the philosopher’s contribution to the exercise of imperial power in his role as the supervisor of public morality.

⁸³ Ševčenko, ‘Society and Intellectual Life’, 83, in support of his view that the intellectuals only wanted to please the emperor, adduces the fact that Chortasmenos (p. 221), in his encomium for Manuel, resurrects the motif of the emperor as ‘living law (νόμος ἔμψυχος)’ from the traditional stockpile of imperial ideology.

and, more importantly, that the model of the emperor they depict had no meaning beyond the exercise of power in a particular period. Thus, although we can see that the main lines of political ideology did not change, the ideal imperial qualities attributed to each emperor, in the context of the state that the last Palaiologoi were able or trying to organise, reveal a degree of differentiation. The crucial question that arises may be formulated as follows: what was the policy that Manuel and John would have followed when differentiated from their predecessors by their learning and by the difficulties with which they had to contend in the 15th century?

In formulating this question, I repeat what I already have already hinted at: that we must read these texts against the background of their particular circumstances, looking at why commonplaces and stereotypes are invoked and how they worked in those circumstances. It was apparent from our analysis that, for all their stereotyping of ideas, the products of court rhetoric were directed at specific recipients and contained a political message that was relevant to each occasion. Our aim, then, is to understand how the audience received the commonplaces, and especially what meaning the *archontes* attached to them. In other words, even if we have to invert our perspective, we need to trace, in the repetition of commonplaces, what the Constantinopolitan élite expected of the emperor.

Of the models we have referred to, that which acquires most weight is the ideal of the philosopher-king who serves the common good. Undoubtedly, the formation of a ‘philosophers’ party’, that is of intellectuals who adopted a more rational approach to the world, nourished the ideal of the philosopher-king, and it is known that Manuel came from this circle, as indeed did John, who had received a sound education as a pupil of Theodore Antiochites at Monemvasia. Besides, in the circumstances of the Palaiologan Renaissance, classical education had acquired an intrinsic value,⁸⁴ and it is understandable

⁸⁴ Scholarios (*PP* II, 15) in an address to Constantine Palaiologos while the latter was still despot, bewails the terrible situation he had endured as a teacher of philosophy with no pupils. He takes the opportunity to pay Constantine the compliment that, even though he had only had a few lessons of philosophy, he governed by “giving to his works the sincere and clear image of the philosopher”.

that those who had been through it would have vaunted it in the people whom they praised. Manuel Chrysoloras in his letter of reply to the emperor comments at length on the education of Manuel II and his brother Theodore, while John Dokeianos praises the teachers of Constantine Palaiologos as follows: “Your instructors and teachers were more astute and wise than any Centaur or Phoenix, and experience made your study sessions and discussions more serious and worthwhile”.⁸⁵ In consequence, education and especially the study of classical literature was the precondition, or more exactly the means, for a ruler to become a philosopher-king, characterised pre-eminently by his virtue. Manuel Chrysoloras devotes a whole chapter to what he thinks philosophy to be, and identifies it, finally, with virtue, which man and hence the emperor possess both by nature and by education.⁸⁶

Yet the insistence on the idea of the philosopher-king, both in the encomia and by Manuel himself, was not simply an imitation of older models, or simply praise for the education of the last three Byzantine emperors. I believe that this very quality, which recurs in all the texts, had a clear political meaning. The education of Manuel Palaiologos, like that of many of his contemporaries, was fundamentally secular and, as a result, had a different basis from the revealed knowledge and power that were acceptable to the Church. It also presupposed a more rational vision of the world, the view that was held by the philosophers of the time, and was influenced by the teaching of Thomas Aquinas thanks to Manuel’s teacher Kydones. Manuel was himself a distinguished theologian, yet he gave special weight to human reason, even in the study of theology.⁸⁷ The philosopher-king, consequently, who is projected as a model, had the theoretical requirements to detach himself from the Church, where the hesychast and mystical version of doctrine prevailed. The theological discussions

⁸⁵ PP I, 226–7: Οἱ τε ... σοι παιδαγωγοὶ καὶ διδάσκαλοι Κενταύρου παντὸς καὶ Φοίνικος νουνεχέστεροι καὶ σοφώτεροι, τὰς τε σοι σπουδαίας διατριβὰς καὶ ξυναυλίας γενναιοτέρας καὶ λυσιτελεστέρας ἢ πείρα παρέστησε.

⁸⁶ *Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος*, 86–91, 93–4.

⁸⁷ Ch. Dendrinos, ‘Η επιστολή του αυτοκράτορος Μανουήλ Β΄ Παλαιολόγου προς τον Αλέξιον Ιαγούπ και οι αντιλήψεις του περί της σπουδής της θεολογίας και των σχέσεων Εκκλησίας και Πολιτείας’, *Φιλοσοφία Ανάλεκτα* 1 (2001), 67

between the partisans of Palamism and those whom the Palamites characterised as heretics involved many intellectuals of the period, including, to some extent, Manuel II himself. If, however, as I believe, disengagement from the Patriarchate was the political issue for the last Palaiologoi, then the model of the philosopher-king becomes even more interesting. In short, I think that when the intellectuals, in the texts that they wrote in support of imperial policy, insist on portraying both Manuel and John as philosopher-kings, they intended precisely to confirm the emperors’ secular ideological orientation. And, undoubtedly, those to whom they addressed this assurance were the *archontes* who supported them.

On the other hand, we see that the emperor’s concern for public affairs (τὰ κοινὰ) was seen as proof of his virtue. In all the rhetorical texts of the period that we have looked at, the emperor is “the man responsible for public affairs (φροντιστὴς τῶν κοινῶν)”. Isidore praises Manuel Palaiologos because he ran a good administration: “neglecting nothing that pertained to him he took care of all public business”.⁸⁸ John Argyropoulos saw it as “the duty and purpose of kingship to provide for the subjects’ well-being”.⁸⁹ The Aristotelian notion, revived by Thomas Aquinas, of the ruler as servant of the common good differentiated the monarch from the tyrant; at the end of the Middle Ages, it acquired a new relevance for the defence of liberties and territorial sovereignty in the emerging city states of northern and central Italy.⁹⁰ We have no means of determining how far the insistent appeal to the ‘common good’ that we see in our texts was due to the direct or indirect influence of Aquinas or invokes a principle that was basic to the Roman political system. Either way, the detailed analysis of the ideas and influences to which Byzantine

⁸⁸ PP II, 186: φειδόμενος ὅσα ῥέπει πρὸς ἐκεῖνον τῶν κοινῶν ἐπιμελὴς πάντων. See also Chortasmenos, 21, describing the empire as «not defined by money and multitude of armed forces and long lists of subject cities, but by a truly imperial soul who knows how to rule

⁸⁹ PP III, 317: βασιλείας ... ἔργον καὶ τέλος τοὺς ὑπηκόους εὖ ἔχειν παρασκευάζειν.

⁹⁰ See Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge 1978), 79ff. More especially on the political theory of Aquinas, see Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought, from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Oxford 2000), 197–206.

intellectuals were subject would have a point, if their showed signs of a coherent political theory, which is clearly not the case. If, however, as I maintain above, the principles they project were drawn from an ideological 'arsenal' that was indispensable for the exercise of power by the last Palaiologoi, we have to search the Byzantine context for traces of what the intellectuals meant by 'public affairs'. Useful in this regard is a letter of Scholarios, now the monk Gennadios, to Constantine Palaiologos: it hurts him to think that the emperor suffers alone on behalf of all, contending both with enemies and with the consequences of the Council of Florence.⁹¹ Besides, Notaras, in one of the rare pieces of information the gives about himself, writes to Scholarios that he had served the public interest throughout his life. And he adds that it saddens him that "the fatherland suffers badly from being badly governed".⁹² Public affairs, in this sense, are identified with government, but they also have, I think, a more specific meaning that includes the common good and arises from the articulated need for the defence of the fatherland, or, sometimes, for the salvation of the nation. The Byzantine emperor in the 15th century is praised not so much, or not only, for his good governance, but also because he defends nation and fatherland. In other words, he defends a political collectivity, which we now need to define in order to understand what is meant by the 'common good'.

2. Old and New Collectivities

The identity or rather the multiple identities of the Byzantines is a question that has long attracted research. The formation of the Byzantine Empire as a continuation of the Roman, and the adoption of Greek as the official state language, were elements that the Byzantines themselves chose to define themselves, and were bound to receive investigation in the search to delineate Byzantium as a distinct historical entity. Thus the study of the Roman, Christian and Hellenic attributes of the Byzantines, and of the ways in which they were combined and articulated, was essential to the understanding of Byzantine history.

Specifically, in the late period references to the term Hellene (Ἕλληνας) and its derivatives proliferate in the sources, often substituting for, but more often used interchangeably with the word Roman (Ῥωμαῖος) as a marker of Byzantine identity. The uses of the word 'Hellene' show that certain Byzantines were seeking a new identity, or, at least, that their Roman and Orthodox Christian traditions were no longer sufficiently distinguishing characteristics. This requirement for a new identity that was expressed by the intellectuals during the Palaiologan period has given rise to an intense and highly ramified discussion by modern historians about the extent to which the subjects of the Byzantine emperor were or felt themselves to be Hellenes or Romans.¹

¹ Sp. Vryonis Jr, 'Recent Scholarship on Continuity and Discontinuity of Culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, Modern Greeks, *Byzantina kai Metabyzantina 1. The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. Sp. Vryonis Jr (Malibu 1978), 237–56; 'Byzantine Self-Consciousness in the Fifteenth Century', *The Twilight of Byzantium. Aspects of Cultural and Religious History in the Late Byzantine Empire*, ed. Doula Mouriki – S. Ćurčić (Princeton 1991), 5–14; P. Magdalino, 'Hellenism and Nationalism in Byzantium', *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot 1991), no. XIV; Svoronos, *To ελληνικό έθνος*,

⁹¹ *PP* II, 89.

⁹² *PP* II, 198: τὸ κακῶς πάσχειν τὴν πατρίδα διὰ τὸ κακῶς κυβερνᾶσθαι.

This is not the place to reproduce that discussion. All we need to retain from it is the fact that a group of Byzantine intellectuals claimed a privileged relationship with an ancient Greek past and identified with the Greek intellectual tradition. We should also note that this change of direction had already come about in the 13th century and was bound up with the ideological realignments that followed on the capture of Constantinople in 1204. In the 15th century, none of those who left traces of their opinions in writing denied that he was a Hellene, in one way or another. At the same time, however, no one failed to mention his Roman identity, which was indisputable.² Some people indeed continued to use the compromise designation of ‘Romaiohellenes (Ῥωμαιοέλληνες)’, which had been coined in the previous century.³

As far as our period is concerned, therefore, the question does not arise whether or to what extent Byzantium was Hellenic, and still less if a Hellenic nation existed during the Byzantine period. These questions are, in my opinion, mistaken, precisely because they project on to the past issues and interpretative categories of the present, and as a result produce answers that are by definition misconceived. Conversely, given that the Byzantines, when they ‘discovered’ their Hellenism in the 13th century, promoted it as an element of political rather than cultural collectivity, the question at issue is that of the *political* identity of the Byzantines that crystallised in the 15th century around the aims of the ruling group. In other words, to understand the Hellenism that was being promoted at that time with greater insistence than ever before, we must first examine how the Byzantines perceived their collective identity, or, maybe, which of its elements they regarded as most important for determining their collective

69–81. Svoronos’ views have also been expressed in other publications, notably his article ‘Ἡ ελληνική ιδέα στη βυζαντινή αυτοκρατορία, *Ανάλεκτα Νεοελληνικής Ιστορίας και Ιστοριογραφίας* (Athens 1982), 144–61.

² Cf. *PP* III, 160: “he knew indeed what the Roman nation was and how its leader should be”. See also *ibid.*, 162, 176.

³ See *PP* III, 152: “all the Hellenes and Romans under the sun are nothing if not equal ... and from both these distinguished races arose the most distinguished and beautiful race of all, which one could felicitously call Romaiohellenes. By such men, then, was this city settled and governed”.

interests. It is useful to approach this investigation via the notions of *patris* (homeland, country) and *genos* (race or nation), which occur with great frequency in the texts of the period. The content of these notions proves revealing of the general political choices of the people who used them.

A. *The notion of patris (homeland or country)*

Contemporary scholarship, both on antiquity and the Middle Ages and on the modern period, has repeatedly been concerned with the notion of homeland and its historical application at different times. It is generally accepted that homeland and patriotism are historical constructions corresponding to the methods that societies or social classes choose in forming their collective identities according to their various needs. Where Byzantine society is concerned, since the use of the word *patris* has not been adequately studied, we cannot be reasonably sure what the Byzantines thought their homeland to be. Consequently, what interests us is to understand what the Byzantines meant during the 15th century when they talked about their *patris*, something which they did quite frequently, as I have already suggested, in the acute state of war prevailing at this time.⁴

Certainly, the treatment of a subject related to the political theories that existed, the political strategies being applied, and the collective identities being constructed, cannot be confined to the quotation of a few illustrative passages from Byzantine texts. However, these and other similar texts are sufficient to demonstrate that the people of the time did not all perceive their homeland in the same way, that is they did not all mean the same thing when they talked about their *patris*. Moreover, the way in which they referred to ‘us’, and consequently the process by which the notion of *patris* acquired specific meaning, was a result of the wider social changes, which we have commented on many times. From this point of view, it is not of primary concern to

⁴ I undertook a preliminary treatment of the subject in my article ‘Ἡ έννοια της πατρίδας κατά τον 15ο αιώνα’, 1453: *Ἡ άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης και η μετάβαση από τους μεσαιωνικούς στους νεώτερους χρόνους*, 147–60.

categorise the references to, and borrowings from, Greek and Roman antiquity by 15th-century authors. It is more useful, in my opinion, to describe the parameters of the problem, look at the likelihood that references to antiquity had a political function in the specific conditions of the time.

In Byzantine texts of all periods, the word *patris* primarily means 'birthplace'. *Patris* in this sense is one of the factors that distinguish one person from another. In the Lives of saints, for example, the saint's place of birth is usually named, although this does not confer any additional identity on the subject of the biography, analogous to that conferred by other biographical elements, like the fact of having pious or, later, illustrious parents.

In the late period, and especially after the 13th century, the notion of homeland becomes broader. The word *patris*, in some circumstances, comes to express a two-way relationship between a man and his place of origin. The birthplace thus acquires other connotations beyond the merely geographical, since it condenses political and cultural meanings that define all people related to it. Conversely, and equally, the place is defined by the worth of its inhabitants, both individually and collectively.⁵ Thus, as a result of the bilateral relationship formed between a man and his place of origin, the place becomes a homeland, that is a badge of identity, and acquires an ever-increasing emotional charge.⁶

The place that resonates most loudly with this relationship is, of course, Constantinople, with Thessaloniki in second place. More generally, however, the place that gradually becomes equated with the

⁵ See Kydones, ed. Loenertz, I, 24, who writes to James Pyropoulos, "thus will you adorn your homeland, which has made you a good citizen", and to Radenos (ed. Loenertz, II, 72), "O good one, I would wish you to remain in your homeland, enjoying in tranquillity the things it has, while also adorning it by the things you do". See also *PP* I, 224–5.

⁶ Cf. how, according to Syropoulos, 116, Andreas Rodios replied to doubts concerning his intentions during the preparations for the Council of Union: 'I am a citizen and I am indebted to this, my homeland, and I love what is good for it'.

homeland is the city.⁷ The 'civic patriotism' that becomes noticeable in the late period, and constitutes a novelty in comparison with previous centuries, is based on the preponderant role that towns were acquiring with time, as their continually increasing economic activity made the town not only the administrative centre it had always been, but also the decisive object at stake in the conflict between different social groups.⁸ It is thus no coincidence that the decisive shift in the transformation of the city into a *patris* occurred in the second half of the 14th century, where Angeliki Konstantakopoulou has located it for Thessaloniki.

Konstantakopoulou based her research, among other things, on Manuel II's speech of 'Advice to the inhabitants of Thessaloniki when they were under siege'.⁹ This was the speech that he pronounced before a "large assembly (μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας)" when the Turks were besieging the city in 1383–4 and he had made it his base in his struggle against his rival claimants to the throne.¹⁰ The speech was about averting the danger; essentially, however, its purpose was to prevent an unconditional surrender to the Turks. Thus, in a situation where his political position depended on the successful defence of Thessaloniki, both because of the Turkish threat and because of the dynastic struggles, Manuel appealed to the city's inhabitants to fight on its behalf, even to the extent of sacrificing their lives.¹¹ He further emphasised that Thessaloniki had been the homeland of Philip and Alexander, whom they should imitate in showing their love for it.

Manuel returns to the subject in his funeral oration for Theodore Palaiologos, which allows us to make certain additional observations concerning the meaning he gave to the notion of *patris*. Manuel

⁷ Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, *Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλονίκη. Χώρος και ιδεολογία* (Ioannina 1996), 197ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁹ B. Laourdas, 'Ο "Συμβουλευτικός πρὸς τοὺς Θεσσαλονικεῖς" τοῦ Μανουὴλ Παλαιολόγου', *Μακεδονικά* 3 (1953–1955), 290–307; Konstantakopoulou, 165–6.

¹⁰ See in general G.T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessaloniki, 1382–1387* (Rome 1960).

¹¹ 'Συμβουλευτικός', 299: "death is better than such enslavement".

attempts to justify his brother's policy, responding to accusations mainly in regard to Theodore's decision to sell first Corinth and then the whole despotate of Mystras to the Knights of St John of Rhodes. This decision had provoked an uprising by the inhabitants of the region of Mystras,¹² as well as a reaction by the emperor, who wanted to take action personally in the Peloponnese after his brother's death. The funeral oration was composed, as we have observed, with the clear intention of strengthening the tottering power of the Palaiologoi and confirming their dynastic legitimacy in the area.¹³ For that reason, his basic argument is that both Theodore's military activity and his diplomatic choices had been undertaken with the salvation of the Peloponnese in mind.

In the matter that concerns us, *patris* for Theodore was in principle Constantinople: "his *patris* was good and so were his parents," says his brother, weaving an encomium of the City.¹⁴ Constantinople, the archetypal city-homeland, not only did him honour but also shaped the man with the excellence that he had acquired thanks more to virtue and learning than to the use of arms.¹⁵ However, his glorious birthplace, along with his glorious parents, were the precondition for Theodore to develop his virtue, fighting "on behalf of homeland, race and forebears".¹⁶ In this text of Manuel's we see that the homeland for which Theodore was fighting was geographically broader than his birthplace; in any case, Theodore had left it at an early age, following he fortunes of this father and brother.¹⁷ His homeland, then, was a whole region, the Peloponnese, which Theodore ruled as despot; here he conducted all the activity for which the emperor praises him. This was the state that certain *archontes* – evidently Theodore's opponents – refused to defend, going over to the enemy. These, according to Manuel, had destroyed their identity. "I don't know what you would

¹² D.A. Zakythinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée. Vie et institutions*, ed. Chr. Maltezou (London 1975), 220–2.

¹³ See above, p. 116–7

¹⁴ *Funeral Oration*, 79: ἀγαθὴ τοῦτῳ καὶ ἡ πατρίς καὶ οἱ φύσαντες.

¹⁵ *Funeral Oration*, 81–3.

¹⁶ *Funeral Oration*, 111: ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος τε καὶ τοῦ γένους καὶ τῶν φύσαντων.

¹⁷ *Funeral Oration*, 113–5.

call them – Romans and Christians because of their race and their baptism, or the opposite because of their choices and their deeds, and enemies because of their perverted and manic attitude to heir homeland?"¹⁸ The only service they performed was that they provided the occasion for Theodore to display his virtue.

We see that in the emperor's perception, whether the homeland was identified with his city, meaning Thessaloniki, or with a whole region, the Peloponnese, it had a clearly political dimension, since it corresponded to the territorial limits of a power that was under threat. What Manuel Palaiologos was essentially aiming at in terms of the exercise of power, using his public speeches, was for his audience to get a sense of belonging to a community that had a territorial definition as well. It is interesting that Manuel also gives a political dimension to the notion of *patris* in a document of another kind. Confirming by chrysobull the authenticity of the sacred relics that he is donating to the queen of Denmark, he explains that he is travelling "to these western parts and to other countries (*patridas*) of Christian kings and rulers" in order to seek aid in view of the Turkish threat.¹⁹ The authors of the encomia mentioned above are writing in the same spirit, and echoing the same opinions. In their texts, Constantinople as the *patris* of the emperors they are praising has a clearly political significance. This is why they not only extol the City's beauty and glorious past, but also give special importance to the military capability and effectiveness of the emperor who has taken on the task of saving it.²⁰

Manuel Chrysoloras, in the well-known critique that Manuel II had requested of his own funeral oration on his brother Theodore Palaologos, writes a small treatise on the various questions touched on

¹⁸ *Funeral Oration*, 116: οὐς οὐκ οἶδα ὅτι καλέσετε, Ῥωμαίους καὶ Χριστιανούς διὰ τὸ γένος καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα ἢ τάνάντια διὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν καὶ τὰς πράξεις, ἐχθρούς διὰ τὸ πρὸς τὴν πατρίδα διεστραμμένον καὶ μανικόν.

¹⁹ G.T. Dennis, 'Two Unknown Documents of Manuel II Paleologus', *Travaux et Mémoires* 3 (1968), 397–404 [= *Byzantium and the Franks* (London 1982), no. VIII]: εἰς ταῦτα τὰ δυσικὰ μέρη καὶ εἰς ἄλλας πατρίδας Χριστιανῶν ῥηγῶν καὶ ἀρχόντων. In the Latin text of the chrysobull *πατρίδας* is translated as *regiones*.

²⁰ Cf. *PP* III, 145–50.

by the text. Among them is the notion of homeland. In Chrysoloras' response, which we commented on above, we find all the possible meanings of the word *patris*, according to the context. Apart from homeland in the sense of birthplace,²¹ Chrysoloras generally agrees with Palaiologos' views, emphasising the political dimension a bit more,²² and introducing a racial dimension into the discussion.²³ There is too in Chrysoloras' conception the cultural dimension of the homeland, inasmuch as he comments on the spiritual achievements that have contributed to Constantinople throughout the ages. However, this dimension does not interest him in itself, but because it legalises the political dimension, as is clear from the text of his that we have mentioned, the 'Comparison of the Old and New Rome'.²⁴ It is interesting that in his response to the emperor's funeral oration, Chrysoloras urges Manuel to fight for "our race (ἡμέτερον γένος), which, he explains, is descended from both Hellenes and Romans."²⁵

The notion of *patris*, as Manuel Palaiologos seems to have conceived of it, presents analogies with the idea of 'homeland' that was being cultivated at the same time in the West, either in the framework of

²¹ Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 95: "You showed how he was with regard to homeland and parents, and you, who say this, have become the same".

²² Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 96: "And those things which you show that he did for homeland and nation were indeed worthy and beneficial to both ... and the things you said about the good ruler, they also proved to be good for the community of the nation".

²³ Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 68: "if you should be of the same tribe, you can consider your praise of the dead as applying to yourself and your *patris*"; 98: "The whole speech is about homeland and nation and laws and justice, all of which you manifestly defend by writing such works".

²⁴ PG 156, col. 40: "Two most powerful and wise nations, Romans and Hellenes, the one ruling then, the other having ruled just before it, both boasting art, honour and magnificence, came together to found this city [Constantinople], and they used other nations and their skills for their service". See the comment of G. Dagron, 'Orthodoxie byzantine et culture hellénique autour de 1453', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome* 113, part 2 (2001), 786: "[Chrysoloras] présente Constantinople non seulement comme une symbiose de Grèce et de Rome, mais comme le produit d'un 'genos' commun, d'une 'race' commune, à laquelle incombe aujourd'hui le devoir de restaurer un patrimoine commun".

²⁵ Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 117.

the so-called 'national' monarchies, or in that of the autonomous Italian city-states, which claimed, often successfully, a territorially defined and thus secularised *patria*. It has been observed, moreover, that while in the first centuries of the Middle Ages the ancient *patria communis* was located, under the influence of Christianisation, in heaven and man was the citizen of a heavenly world, from the 13th century onwards, the homeland again came to correspond to a political and hence secular unit.²⁶

Given these analogies, the question arises as to whether Manuel Palaiologos had conceived of the necessity of a similar 'national' and secular state. Did he and his successors acquire a different idea of their state, both because the Turkish expansion imposed it and because the social situation called for it, especially the survival of the Constantinopolitan élite who supported them? It is obvious, and it has emerged many times in the course of this study, that the answers to such questions can only be formulated indirectly and hypothetically. There do not exist, and it is doubtful whether there ever existed, programmatic statements of imperial policy written either by the emperors themselves or by their learned supporters. It is symptomatic of the Byzantine political system that whatever changes took place or were taking shape in embryo never achieved coherent theoretical expression, as happened in the West.²⁷ Consequently, we are obliged to trace these changes behind the words of the surviving texts and to formulate hypotheses, which only gain a foundation in the context of evaluating certain 'objective' facts, above all the attempts to end the schism of the Churches. When we analyse the relations

²⁶ The study of E. Kantorowicz, 'Pro patria mori in Medieval Political Thought', *American Historical Review* 56 (1953), 472–92 [= *Mourir pour la patrie et autres textes* (Paris 1984), 105–41], remains a classic. It has been a point of reference for subsequent research; see e.g. D. Iogna-Prat, 'Constructions chrétiennes d'un espace politique', *Le Moyen Âge* 107 (2001), 71–99; G. Chittolini, 'The Italian City-State and its Territory', *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*, ed. A. Molho – K. Raaflaub – J. Emlen (Stuttgart 1991), 589–602.

²⁷ See, among others, the instructive comments of Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 50ff, for the role of rhetoric in the framework of the political functioning of the Italian cities, and 103ff, for the political views of the Florentine intellectuals.

between Church and State, we see that on the one hand, the *archontes* encouraged the emperor to distance himself from the choices of the patriarchal officials, while he on the other hand, and especially John VIII, promoted his Unionist agenda without seriously taking those choices into account. Moreover, we have seen that while the last Palaiologoi undoubtedly approached the West in order to secure assistance for saving Constantinople from the Turks, they also did so because in their internal conflicts, rapprochement with the West reduced the Church's pressure on imperial power. In this perspective, the sought-for rapprochement is not only and simply a proof of the indisputable weakening of the Byzantine state; it is also, at the same time, an indicator of a trend towards political secularisation. In other words, I maintain that the Palaiologoi aimed at a more secularised form of authority and that the meaning which Manuel gave to the word *patris* is indicative of this political ambition.

We have already pointed out that during the period under review there were different understandings of the concept. A different perception of *patris* compared with that of Manuel Palaiologos is evinced, for example, by the hieromonk Joseph Bryennios. In 1415, Bryennios delivered in the palace the speech 'On the reconstruction' of Constantinople in which he encouraged the citizens to contribute: he urged them to undertake the expense of repairing the walls, which was indispensable for the protection of the city against the 'infidels'. In Bryennios' perception, Constantinople was no ordinary city. It was the "megalopolis ... the many-named and great-named City of all cities under the sun"; mainly, however, it was the "communal homeland and mother and nurse of Orthodox Christians ... the holy mountain in which the God of all chose to well".²⁸ Bryennios, the prophet of doom, as P. Gounaridis describes him, convinced of the disasters to come, and undoubtedly a political opponent of the Palaiologoi in their initiatives for Church Union,²⁹ also refers to the

²⁸ Bryennios, ed. Tomadakis, 243–52: ἡ μεγαλόπολις ... καὶ Πόλις πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον πόλεων καὶ πολυώνυμος ... καὶ μεγαλώνυμος ... ἡ κοινὴ πατρίς καὶ μήτηρ καὶ τροφὸς τῶν ὀρθοδόξων χριστιανῶν ... ὄρος ἅγιον ἐν ᾧ ὁ τῶν ὅλων Θεὸς κατοικεῖν ἤρετίσατο.

²⁹ Gounaridis, Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος'.

city, "pride of the race (καύχημα τοῦ γένους)" as his homeland and is concerned with the need to save it. Indeed he begins by likening it to an old mother whose sons must look after her, while later on he compares it with the home of each of the citizens who for exactly this reason, he believes, have the obligation to protect it.³⁰ Bryennios declares, in the full knowledge that many of his audience would agree, that Constantinople was their native city and therefore homeland with a moral and emotional dimension for all of them; to make the need for saving it more immediate, he confines it to the limits of the household, a quintessentially medieval collectivity.³¹ Yet the prospect of the Fall threatened people and their property, but also posed a danger to the faith.³² Thus according to Bryennios, the defence of the City, which "a multitude of venerable monasteries and churches" adorned, was a moral and personal duty for Christians in the face of the infidel. The inhabitants of Thessaloniki had a similar duty to save their native city from the infidels, as their metropolitan Symeon repeatedly pointed out to them,³³ or as John Anagnostes proclaimed, describing Thessaloniki as "nurse and mother (τροφὸν καὶ μητέρα)."³⁴

Bryennios belonged to a group of intellectuals who invested the notion of *patris* with religious characteristics, yet without referring

³⁰ Bryennios, ed. Tomadakis, 247: "if you care for your own, then care for the community, and especially for the homeland ... as you look after your house, look after the City as well".

³¹ It is noteworthy that the same parallel between the city and the house is made by the anonymous author of the 'Remembrance' of Constantinople, when he says: Ἐχάσασιν τὸ σπιτιν τους, τὴν Πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν τὸ θάρρος καὶ τὸ καύχημα καὶ τὴν ἀπαντοχίην τους. See *la caduta di Costantinopoli. L'eco del mondo*, II, ed. A. Pertusi (Verona 1976), 366.

³² Bryennios, ed. Tomadakis, 247: "if it is razed or captured, but O my Christ, let that not happen. What soul will be unshaken in the faith?"

³³ Balfour, *Symeon*, 56: "Since everything failed and there was no-one to help the homeland, as everyone in the councils was silent, while outside others revolted and were disorderly, there occurred a defection of some of us to the unbelievers". See also *ibid.*, 68: "unless we betray or homeland to the enemies of the faith, for want of rescue." For the views of Symeon and other learned churchmen on Thessaloniki, see Konstantakopoulou, *Βυζαντινὴ Θεσσαλονίκη*, 200.

³⁴ John Anagnostes, *Lament on the capture of the city of Thessaloniki*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn 1838), 533.

to any kind of heavenly homeland. Of course, even in this period some intellectuals, mainly ecclesiastical, speak of the other-worldly homeland of Christians;³⁵ however, they do not concern us here, since their views are marginal in comparison with those of people like Bryennios, who, when they speak of their *patris* as the “hearth of Orthodoxy (ἑστία τῶν ὀρθοδόξων)”, enunciate a political statement that is relevant to the present and, above all, the future of the empire, and especially the empire of the “race/nation of the Orthodox (γένους τῶν ὀρθοδόξων)”.

B. Race of the Hellenes – race of the Orthodox

The *genos*, which both Bryennios and Chrysoloras refer to, is yet another notion that poses many problems, at least for the period we are studying, when we realise that its meaning is not self-evidently the same for all who use the word. The frequent references, not only by these two authors, but by almost all the intellectuals of the period, to the *genos* of the Hellenes, or of the Romans, or of the Greeks (Ἕλληνες), or even of the Orthodox, make it necessary to investigate, as we did for the notion of *patris*, the significance and the subject-matter of the various formulations.

Genos literally defines people of common origin, mainly common family descent; thus in our texts the word often retains its primary meaning of family. We know how highly Byzantine aristocrats valued this meaning, when they claimed a noble lineage from the distant past. The echo of the social importance of nobility can be discerned, though

³⁵ See the words of John Eugenikos (*PP* I, 145): “but you too will will at some time pay the common debt ... and leaving everything on earth you will depart for heaven, your true homeland”. See also Bryennios’ remark to Kydones: Thus are we disposed towards you, O excellency; may you soon return to your homeland and find a fitting end to your wisdom”, where by homeland he means Orthodoxy: N.B. Tomadakis, ‘Μελετήματα περί Ἰωσήφ Βρυεννίου’, *ΕΕΒΣ* 29 (1959), 30. Cf. also Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, 355: “if we are about to be part of the eternal homeland, the sufferings of this temporary abode will not distress us”. Blanchet, *Georges Gennadios Scholarios*, 128, considers that Scholarios is talking about the “eternal *patris*” because Constantinople no longer counted as a homeland.

without being dominant, in the texts we are studying. Often, for example, *genos* (=descent) and *patris* (=birthplace) are highlighted as personal characteristics of the persons being lauded, which conforms, of course, to the rules of rhetoric.³⁶ However, the word *genos* has greater significance in the texts when it is used to designate wider collectivities beyond the family. For this reason, we need to look for the criteria on the basis of which those collectivities are considered to have been formed.

We stated above that in the 15th century intellectuals recognised themselves to be Hellenes. What bound them together collectively as a *genos* of Hellenes was in principle the Greek language, which was an undeniable reality for all of them. Chortasmenos urged his friend Demetrios Maurianos, when he reached the islands that “Latin greed had occupied” to observe “the behaviour of men, whether it was completely savage and had completely forgotten the speech of the Hellenes”.³⁷ Kydones was certain that he belonged to the same *genos* as Plato: “the similarity of language does not allow us to be distinguished”, he says in a letter.³⁸ The clearest and best known definition of the *genos* as a political collectivity is given by Plethon, who highlights the criteria of language and education: “We, the people you lead and rule, are Hellenes by race, as our language and traditional education bear witness”.³⁹ The Greek language distinguished their own race from other linguistic groups, especially the *genos* of barbarians.⁴⁰ Yet although all the intellectuals belonged to the same *genos* as Greek speakers, what emerges from the analysis of their texts is the fact that the criterion of language was not always sufficient for their conception

³⁶ See, e.g., in the encomium by Isidore of Kiev (*PP* III, 135): “The law of encomia prescribes generally that three things are to be described for the persons being praised: deeds, descent, and birthplace”.

³⁷ Chortasmenos, 216: ἡ λατινικὴ κατέσχε πλεονεξία ..., ... τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἦθη, εἰ μὴ παντάσῃν ἐξηγημένα τυγχάνει καὶ τῆς Ἑλλήνων ὁμιλίας ἐπιλέλησται.

³⁸ Kydones, ed. Loenertz, I, 66: ἡ γὰρ τῆς φωνῆς ὁμοιότης καὶ ἡμᾶς κρίνειν οὐ συγχωρεῖ. Cf. also *PP* III, 194: “the cities [of Aitolokarnania] are of pure Hellenic race” (in contrast to the countryside which was settled by Albanians).

³⁹ *PP* III, 248: Ἔσμεν γὰρ οὖν ὧν ἠγεῖσθε καὶ βασιλεύετε Ἕλληνες τὸ γένος, ὡς ἡ φωνὴ καὶ ἡ πάτριος παιδεία μαρτυρεῖ.

⁴⁰ Examples in *PP* III, 159, 173, 176.

of the collectivity they sought or claimed to belong to. Sometimes a collectivity is seen to have more than one component, aside from language, even within the same text.⁴¹ For example, a single sentence of John Eugenikos uses several formulae to identify the group of ‘us’ with which the author associated himself: “the people of Christ, the holy nation, the royal priesthood”⁴², who are not only Orthodox, who partake of learning and education, and are honoured by belonging to the wonderful *genos* of the Romans”⁴³. Interesting too is the multiple significance of the word *genos* in the “consent” signed by the *archon* Manuel Tarchaneiotos Boullotes for the Council of Florence. Boullotes affirms that the Union “is to the advantage of the *genos* of Christians” if it happens “with due honour to our Church”, and he is sure that this, among other things, will redound “to the honour of our *genos*”⁴⁴.

Since the Greek language was not adequate as a distinguishing characteristic, what other elements sustained the *genos* as a collectivity? If we begin our investigation with Bryennios, and his reference to the “*genos* of the Orthodox”, we can see that he conceived of the *genos* as a religious collectivity, a collectivity formed by a common doctrine. But George Scholarios too considered the *genos* to be a religious collectivity, even though he sometimes refers to it as Hellenic. Scholarios believed that the Orthodox were the *genos* who, through the decline and fall of the state that protected them, had become “unhappy, fearful and wretched (δυστυχές, δειλαιον και δύστηνον)”. The Byzantine Empire was the Christian kingdom, a divine state, which was governed by respect for natural and human law, made

⁴¹ Cf. *PP* III, 162, referring to the emperor’s “destruction of the barbarians, which is to say the liberty of the Romans and every Christian *genos*”. Later (p. 165) he refers to the *genos* in the political sense of the Byzantine people: “since public affairs occupied him, he was always looking to the benefit of the *genos*”.

⁴² These expressions come from 1 Peter 2.9, which in turn echoes the Old Testament (Ex 19. 5–6).

⁴³ *PPI*, 142: ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ λαός, τὸ ἅγιον ἔθνος, τὸ βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα, οἱ μὴ μόνον ὀρθόδοξοι μάλιστα, ἀλλὰ καὶ λόγου καὶ παιδείας μετεσχηκότες ... τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ τῶν Ῥωμαίων γένους φιλοτιμούμενοι

⁴⁴ συμφέρει παντὶ τῷ γένει τῶν Χριστιανῶν ... μετὰ τῆς προσηκούσης τιμῆς τῆ ἡμετέρας Ἐκκλησίας ... εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ ἡμετέρου γένους.

perfect by the law of divine grace.⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that Scholarios’ conception of the *patris* shows a turnabout corresponding to that which ended in him becoming a monk. While he was an imperial official he invested the word with political meaning,⁴⁶ in his writings after the Council of Florence, he does not say anything, either before or after 1453, about a *patris* wider than Constantinople. This he evokes as his birthplace and recognises that it must be saved;⁴⁷ after the Fall, he refers to it as the homeland of “the present Hellenic race”⁴⁸. In this context, and given the meaning that Scholarios gave to the term ‘hellenic’, identifying the Hellenic race with the *genos* of the Orthodox, Constantinople became the lost centre of Orthodoxy;⁴⁹ although the *genos* kept the unifying feature of language, it was basically formed by the Christian religion. The views of the first patriarch after the Fall and the way in which he conceived of the collectivities that he had to defend are helpful for our analysis, because of the role that he

⁴⁵ A. Angelou, ‘Ο Γεννάδιος Σχολάριος καὶ ἡ Ἄλωση’, *Ἡ Ἄλωση τῆς Πόλης*, ed. E. Chrysos (Athens 1994), 99–132, especially 121–2 for comment on Scholarios’ views concerning the consequences of the Fall.

⁴⁶ Blanchet, *Georges Gemnadios Scholarios*, 304–5, commenting on Scholarios’ conviction that he was “contributing to the good of the homeland” as an intellectual and a teacher of Latin. See particularly Scholarios, *Oeuvres complètes*, I, 387: “the *patris* has regaled us, not sparing gifts and honours, and we have not been useless or bad in return ... we are not toublemaking or about to desert her”.

⁴⁷ See his letter to Constantine Palaiologos (*PP* II, 96): “if those who have do not empty their money-bags and strong-boxes – and they will not empty them equally to help their homeland and themselves”. See also what he says in his ‘Lament’ of 1460: *Oeuvres complètes*, I, 283–94.

⁴⁸ Lament, ‘On the capture of the City and his resignation from the patriarchate’, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, 211: τῷ νῦν ἐλληνικῷ γένει.

⁴⁹ See Scholarios’ words: “O homeland of mine and of all the people who are called by the name of Christ ... O city, though impoverished in the last years and uninhabited for the most part, living in daily fear and stripped entirely of its renowned property, yet free and nurturing such inhabitants, and, most importantly, nurturing hem for Christ himself (*Oeuvres complètes*, I, 287). Below, p. 291, he returns to the subject: “From the beginning you were a Christian metropolis, you were contemporary with the freedom of Christianity, when pious emperors took root; from you as if from a spring, the streams of piety flowed everywhere”. See the comments of A. Angelou, ‘Who am I? Scholarios’ answers and the Hellenic identity’, *ΦΙΛΕΛΛΗΝ. Studies in Honour of Robert Browning*, ed. E. Jeffreys et al. (Venice 1996), 1–19.

performed, both before and after 1453. It is evident therefore, that, even before the termination of the Byzantine state, in the conception of Scholarios, now a monk, as in that of Bryennios, the collectivity to which they thought of themselves as belonging was mainly of a religious character, and hence extended or ought to extend to the whole *oikoumene* – in a way reminiscent of the ‘Orthodox utopia’ of the Patriarchate.⁵⁰

If we compare this religious conception of the *genos* with that of Chrysoloras, we can see that when the latter refers, as he does very often, to what he calls the “common race (κοινὸν γένος),” he gives it both a moral and –mainly– a political dimension.⁵¹ Since, besides, Chrysoloras considered himself to belong to a race that came from Hellas and Rome, it is significant that in his conception, *patris* acquired the same political weight as the *genos*.⁵² It acquires the same weight in the writings of other intellectuals, especially when they praise the emperor, either because, in the words of Isidore of Kiev, “he carries the struggle against the barbarian, not only where the soul is concerned, but but also for his *genos* and all his government and power”;⁵³ or as Argyropoulos says of John VIII, he saves “the *genos* of Hellenes”.⁵⁴ According to an anonymous funeral oration for Manuel II, the emperor struggled “for the freedom of the *genos*”,⁵⁵ and thanks to him “the city

⁵⁰ Bryennios, ed. Tomadakis, 251, assures his listeners that their contribution to the repair of the walls will benefit “tens of thousands of men ... those alive to day, and those of future generations”.

⁵¹ Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 116: “he beseeches us not on behalf of our own children, not for our house, not for our wife; rather he asks on behalf of all of these, for all come under the common *genos*”.

⁵² Χρυσολωρᾶ Λόγος, 99: “also as lord and emperor to the one who struggled not a little on behalf of the *patris* and the *genos*”.

⁵³ PP III, 159: ἀντιπερίστησι τὸν ἀγῶνα τῷ βαρβάρῳ, οὐ τὸν περὶ ψυχῆς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ γένους καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἀρχῆς ἀπάσης αὐτῷ

⁵⁴ PP III, 313: τὸ γένος τῶν Ἑλλήνων. See also p. 315: “Now that you, O greatest of emperors, have departed from among men and are no more, it is not just one city and nation (ἔθνος), but all cities of the Hellenes and all our peoples (γένη), that have again returned to a state of insecurity”.

⁵⁵ Dendrinos, ‘An Unpublished Funeral Oration’, 444: ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ γένους ἐλευθερίας.

is safe ... the *genos* is safe, safe too are the sanctuaries, the temples, the Stoas and all [the city’s] manifold beauties”.⁵⁶ At another point in the oration, the notion of *genos* has both political and cultural significance: “For it is evident that apart from the territory inhabited by the Hellenes, the rest of the earth has fallen to two great and famous races: the Latins on the one hand pride themselves on their learning, while the boast of the accursed Achemenids is that they have been allotted expertise in warfare”.⁵⁷ Manuel surpassed both these races, the Latins and the Turks, with his wisdom and his deeds.

In these texts, *patris* and *genos* have a political meaning, and we encounter them at the point where the homeland is the territorially defined cradle of the race. Thus the homeland conceived of by Chrysoloras approximates to the ‘country’ (χώρα) of the Peloponnese, as Plethon calls the state on the revival of which he offered advice to Manuel Palaiologos.⁵⁸ John Argyropoulos is more clear on the relationship between race and territorial regime; in his funeral oration for John Palaiologos, he laments that with the emperor’s death, “it is not just one city and nation (ἔθνος), but all cities of the Hellenes and all our peoples (γένη), that have again returned to a state of insecurity, all city walls are shaken and they seem ready to fall under barbarian servitude”.⁵⁹ In the same oration he also refers to the “freedom of Hellenes”, which is identical with the freedom of the *genos* discussed by the anonymous author of the funeral oration for Manuel. We will return later to the notion of freedom, but it is relevant here, because confirms the identity of the *patris* with the *genos*, that is it confirms the equation of the two political collectivities with which the emperor and the intellectuals identified.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 447: σῶμα μὲν ἢ πόλις ... σῶν δὲ τὸ γένος, σῶμα δὲ τὰ ἱερά, καὶ νεώ, καὶ Στοαί, καὶ κάλλη παντοδαπά.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 449: Δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι χωρὶς οὐ κατοικοῦσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες, τὸ λοιπὸν τῆς γῆς, δύο ταῦτα γένη, μέγιστα τε καὶ γνωριμώτατα διέλαχον· καὶ Λατίνοι μὲν ... ἐπὶ σοφία κομπάζουσι· τοῖς δὲ κάκιστ’ ἀπολλομένους Ἀχαμενίδαις ... ἢ τῶν πολεμικῶν ἐμπειρία τὸ καύχημα ... εἰς κλῆρον αὐτοῖς ἐλογίσθη.

⁵⁸ George Gemistos Plethon, *On the state of the Peloponnese*, PP III, 247ff.

⁵⁹ PP III, 315: οὐ μία πόλις οὐδ’ ἔθνος ἓν, ἀλλ’ Ἑλλήνων ἅπασαι πόλεις καὶ γένη πάντα τὰ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐπ’ οὐδενὸς βεβήκασιν ἀσφαλοῦς, σειεται τε πάντα πόλεων τείχη καὶ πεσεῖν ἤδη δοκεῖ καὶ δουλεῦν βαρβάρους.

Finally, it is worth commenting on an incident related by Syropoulos, which allows us to distinguish the various nuances that words had acquired with the passage of time. During the preparations for the Council, in a letter that was read out before the patriarch and the ecclesiastical officials, the Pope called the Byzantines ‘Greeks’ (Γραικοὺς). The metropolitan of Medeia considered this as an insult, a fact that drew an ironic comment from the emperor when he heard about it: “This man who takes ‘Greeks’ to be an insult asks me for favours!” Syropoulos observes, “thus it was that the metropolitan of Medeia provoked laughter in us, and shame and foolish regret in himself because of his rustic ignorance”.⁶⁰ The ‘rusticity’ of the bishop creates another dimension to the question we are examining: for many centuries, Westerners had called the Byzantines Greeks, meaning schismatics. If we combine this fact with what we said earlier about the identity projected by the Byzantines, we can see how out of date the ‘schismatic’ label appeared not only to the emperor but even to ecclesiastical officials like Syropoulos.

C. The political identities of the Byzantines in the 15th century

We consider the texts of Manuel Palaiologos and Joseph Bryennios representative of the way in which the homeland was perceived by the Byzantines before the Fall, and we reiterate what we have already pointed out: namely, that the notion of *patris* was clearer broader in comparison with former centuries, since it conveyed the emotional and moral ties that people developed with their place of origin over the course of time. However, in the conceptions expressed by these texts, although we do not find the expression of fully-formed and distinct political theories, a basic difference consists in the fact that in one case it is a question of a *patria communis* and in the other of a *patria propria*. Those who referred, like Manuel Palaiologos, to a *patria communis*, a homeland with territorial sovereignty and political substance, were

⁶⁰ Syropoulos, 124: τοιοῦτος ὢν καὶ ζητεῖ παρ’ ἐμοῦ εὐεργεσίαν, ὅστις τὸ Γραικὸς ὡς ὕβριν ἡγεῖται... ὅθεν καὶ γέλωτα μὲν ἡμῖν προὔξεν ὁ Μήδειας, ἑαυτῷ δὲ τὴν ἐξ ἀγροικίας αἰδῶ καὶ ἀνόητον μεταμέλειαν.

aiming, I believe, at the formation of a political entity framed by the cultural boundaries of religion and mainly of language, that separated them from other people. *Barbaroi*, denoting those who were neither Christian nor Greek-speaking, is a word that often recurs in the texts of Manuel to express the threat posed to that political entity,⁶¹ whose members mainly thought of themselves as Hellenes. There existed, in other words, a cultural entity consisting of those who spoke Greek and identified with the ancient Greek cultural tradition, which was seeking to achieve political expression. Their sense of homeland was shaped by a collective memory that comprised both antiquity and the Roman political past. Typical, from this point of view, is the following expression in a speech that was written on the occasion of the Council of Ferrara–Florence: “And do not think that the *genos* of the Greeks (Γραικοὶ) is small and feeble. For all that it is all by itself, under siege for many years ... in the end it has not been crushed. The Peloponnese ... is subject to the empire of the Romans... and all these [the Ionian islands, Attica, Hellas, Thrace and Macedonia] are settled by Greeks”.⁶² Here the “*genos* of the Greeks” is a distinct linguistic and cultural entity, which takes on a geographical identity and claims territorial–political recognition. Conversely, the political entity that had formed under these conditions acquired coherence in promoting the certainty of its Roman past and its aspirations to the ancient Greek cultural heritage.

At the same time, for other intellectuals, like Bryennios and Scholarios, the *patris* was clearly the birthplace, and notably Constantinople as “the soil of our race (ἔδαφος τοῦ ἡμετέρου γένους)”, whose characteristics were only cultural, the most definitive being the religious one. The *patris* was defined by the religious element and its defence was an obligation to strengthen “the race of the Orthodox (γένος τῶν ὀρθοδόξων)”. It is revealing, in my opinion, of the political views of Bryennios and those he represented, that he compared

⁶¹ See for example ‘Συμβουλευτικός’, 298–9; see also PP III, 173.

⁶² PP I, 9, 333: Καὶ μηδὲν οἴεσθε μικρὸν καὶ ἀδρανὲς τὸ Γραικῶν εἶναι γένος. Αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ ἴσως καθ’ ἑαυτὸ, χρόνους ἤδη συχνοῦς πολιορκηθέν ... ἀλλ’ οὐκ εἰς τέλος ἐξετριβή. Πελοπόννησος ... τῇ βασιλείᾳ Ῥωμαίων ὑπέκει ... ταῦτα πάντα ... Γραικῶν οἰκησίς ἐστιν.

Constantinople to an elderly mother, whose inhabitants had to look after her like caring sons. In his conception, the existing homeland-city was indeed aged, but it had to be saved as the cradle of the race, which would gain political expression if it extended to the *oikoumene*. This is why Bryennios did not recognise, or at least ignored, the political entity of the homeland-city where he lived.

All the texts we have looked at above speak of a homeland in danger and call upon their listeners-readers to save it in one way or another. All the authors were conscious of belonging to a *genos* that was under threat, and they considered Constantinople to be its 'common home (κοινήν ἑστίαν)'. The prevailing state of war necessarily favoured or imposed the creation of a patriotic spirit, as is clear from the intellectuals' insistence on efforts to save the city. However, the political conceptions of those who were imbued with this spirit gave different meanings both to the idea of the *patris* and to the idea of the *genos*.

The political vision of Manuel II Palaiologos needed a homeland for his subjects such as we have described: territorially defined, linguistically and perhaps racially homogeneous, sovereign, and, above all, secular. John VIII too championed, according to Argyropoulos, the "freedom (ἐλευθερία)" of his territorially restricted power, the liberty of "the race of Hellenes, and Argyropoulos later called upon Constantine XI to save "the common home of the race, the only salvation left to the Hellenes".⁶³ Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that the notion of *patris* did not have the same meaning for Constantine that it had had for Manuel and John.

However, what we know about Constantine Palaiologos comes from the writings of others, and especially of the historians of the Fall, who attribute to the last emperor what is essentially their own conception not only of the *patris*, but also of the point of his self-sacrifice. In their texts it appears that Constantine Palaiologos and all who stood with him in the critical moments of the siege were above all defending their

⁶³ *Αργυροπούλεια*, 45: κοινή τοῦ γένους ἑστία, ἡ μόνη λέληπται σωτηρία τοῖς Ἕλλησι.

own honour. What Sphrantzes says is revealing: "My late lord, the emperor – what did he not do openly or in secret to help his house, the Christian people, and his very life? Did he ever think of fleeing, if something were to happen, although he could easily have done so?"⁶⁴ According to Doukas, when Mehmet asked Palaiologos to surrender the City peacefully and to leave with the *archontes*, Constantine replied that if he were to do so, he would be reviled throughout the world; at the last moment, indeed, he notified the sultan that he was determined to die with the City's inhabitants in its defence.⁶⁵ Finally, according to another, later text, Constantine Palaiologos told his men: "You well know, my brothers, that we have a common duty to four things, for which we should die rather than live: first, for our faith ... for our homeland ... for the emperor and ... for family and friends."⁶⁶ In particular, Constantine began his supposed speech by saying that the hour had come when "the enemy of the faith" would annihilate them. The emperor called upon his soldiers to show bravery and to fight for the Reigning City that Constantine the Great had offered to the All-Holy Virgin Mary, and which Mehmet wished to convert into "a shrine of blasphemy".

What Constantine is said to be fighting for is not the same as what Manuel had said that his brother Theodore had defended in the Peloponnese. To Constantine Palaiologos is ascribed the intention of defending the imperial institution as a political symbol of Orthodoxy,⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Sphrantzes, 140: Ὁ δὲ μακαρίτης καὶ αὐθέντης μου ὁ βασιλεὺς τί οὐκ ἔπραξεν φανερώς ἢ κρυφίως πρὸς βοήθειαν τοῦ ὀσπιτίου αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἢ τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ; ἢ ἐνεθυμείτο ὅτι, ἐὰν ἐπισυμβῆ τίποτε, νὰ φύγη, δυνατοῦ καὶ εὐκόλου ὄντος. See also Kritoboulos, A.72 §1: «The emperor died too ... choosing to do and suffer everything for the sake of his homeland and his subjects. Seeing the obvious danger that hung over the City ... and being able to save himself by flight, as many people urged him to do, he did not want this, but chose to perish with his homeland and subjects».

⁶⁵ Doukas, XXXIX.1. Cf. Chalkokondyles, VIII, p. 156.

⁶⁶ Phrantzes, *Chronikon*, 272: καλῶς οὖν οἶδατε ἀδελφοὶ ὅτι διὰ τέσσαρά τινα ὀφειλέται κοινῶς ἑσμέν πάντες, ἵνα προτιμήσουμεν ἀποθανεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ ζῆν, πρῶτον μὲν ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν ... ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ... ὑπὲρ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ὑπὲρ συγγενῶν καὶ φίλων.

⁶⁷ See the comments of Gounaridis, Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος, 141–2.

while his brother claimed and defended a politically defined territorial jurisdiction. It is also somewhat different from the ideal for which Loukas Notaras was supposedly put to death: he defended his honour and his position in the existing order of things.

Doukas praises the *archon* Loukas Notaras, because before the executioner he instructed his sons to die for the emperor, their wealth and their fellows.⁶⁸ In Doukas' version, when Notaras was fighting at the Imperial Gate to defend everything that guaranteed his social strength, he too fought for his honour.⁶⁹ It is well known, and we have already observed, that according to another version, when he offered Mehmet a substantial part of his property, the sultan put him to death because he considered him untrustworthy.⁷⁰ If we do not read this version as proof that Notaras really submitted to the sultan, we can better understand why Notaras was obliged to defend his honour. John Moschos, in his funeral oration for Notaras, presents a model portrait of the brave and patriotic state dignitary,⁷¹ while John Eugenikos, trying to persuade the *mezas doux* of the necessity of an anti-Unionist policy, flattered him by writing in a letter, "you have spared no effort in time of need on behalf of your homeland and race".⁷²

It is clear that in Notaras' case as well, the authors of the texts are attributing to him their own conception of the *patris*: the homeland-birthplace and the homeland-cradle of Orthodoxy. In one of the rare instances where Notaras speaks of himself, he writes to Scholarios that, as one who has served the 'common good' for his whole life, he has to admit that his homeland had suffered "through bad government".⁷³ The context of this remark is unknown to us, and thus we cannot be sure who, in his opinion, was responsible for this bad government

⁶⁸ Doukas XI.7; see also Chalkokondyles, Book VIII, p. 166.

⁶⁹ For comment, see Kiousopoulou, 'Ψήγματα μιας βιογραφίας', 173–4.

⁷⁰ Phrantzes, *Chronikon*, 291–3.

⁷¹ E. Legrand, 'Ἰωάννου τοῦ Μόσχου Λόγος Ἐπιτάφιος ἐπὶ τῷ Λουκᾷ Νοταρᾷ', *Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἐταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* 2 (1887), 413–24.

⁷² *PP* I, 144: μήτε τινὸς τῶν ἀπάντων ἐν καιροῖς ἀνάγκης ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος καὶ τοῦ γένους φεισάμενος.

⁷³ *PP* II, 198: διὰ τὸ κακῶς κυβερνᾶσθαι.

and how far he himself had contributed by his communications with the Turks that he mentions in the same letter. We perceive, however, from the connection that he makes between homeland and government, that he was undoubtedly interested by its political dimension. Consequently, it would not be too much to suppose that Notaras too identified the freedom of the City with the common good, which he undertook to defend by battling on the walls. If this was the case, then Notaras was defending his city and country as well as his honour. Yet in contrast to Manuel Chrysoloras, for whom the city as *patris* involved its past,⁷⁴ for Notaras the official it meant only his present situation, which was undoubtedly interwoven with his fellow *archontes* and the emperor. Loukas Notaras, under the impetus of events, gave practical expression to the political dimension of the homeland, although he almost certainly did not develop it theoretically. In the final analysis, this was yet another of the contradictions in his life and that of the other *archontes*.

It is interesting that, several years after the Fall, Michael Apostoles, asked the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III to "restore to its homeland the race scattered all over the earth" and called upon him to install his son Maximilian as ruler "of Byzantium and all the East".⁷⁵ Michael Apostoles considered himself "without city and homeland, a pauper and vagrant".⁷⁶ For all that the reference is primarily to Constantinople, we notice that Apostoles draws the frontiers of his longed-for homeland to include, besides the Balkans, the territories of Asia Minor.⁷⁷ Essentially, Apostoles is seeking the reconstitution of the empire with its old frontiers, yet at the same time, in the rush of his discourse, he identifies it as 'Hellas' and regards it as "the common home of the Hellenes (τὴν κοινὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐστία)". The editor of the text points out that Apostoles

⁷⁴ Kiousopoulou, 'La notion de ville', 71–9.

⁷⁵ B. Laourdas, 'Ἡ πρὸς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Φρειδερίκον τὸν Τρίτον ἐπὶ κλησὶς τοῦ Μιχαὴλ Αποστόλη', *Γέρας Α. Κεραμοπούλου* (Athens 1953), 516–27: τῇ πατρίδι τὸ πανταχοῦ γῆς διεσπαρμένον γένος του ... τοῦ Βυζαντίου καὶ τῆς Ἑφῶς ἀπάσης. Laourdas dates the text to after 1459, when Maximilian was born.

⁷⁶ ἄπολι καὶ ἄπατρι, πένη καὶ ἀγύρτη.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 525.

expresses, more or less simultaneously, on the one hand the need to reconstitute the empire, which will protect all the Orthodox, that is his “scattered race” (διεσπαρμένον γένος), and on the other hand, the need for the creation of a ‘nation’ state. The territorially, politically and culturally defined homeland that Michael Apostoles conceives of as a state somewhat resembles, in its territorial and political definition, the *patris* envisaged by Manuel Palaiologos. Constantinople is the political centre of this homeland–state. In any case, Apostoles had already addressed Constantine Palaiologos in these terms before the Fall: “having rightfully received by kindly Fate the rule over this our race and this common home of the Hellenes, be for us ... a great emperor”.⁷⁸ Later, in contrast, for the historians of the Fall, but also for Scholarios, Constantinople was their birthplace, which was sometimes personified and wept for its capture, but did not have a political dimension.⁷⁹

To sum up, we can see that while at the end of the 14th century there gradually took shape a wider notion of the homeland that combined political geographical and cultural meaning, in the years after the Fall, the word *patris*, when it was used, referred to Constantinople and whatever Constantinople meant for each individual. Thus for Doukas it meant the cradle of the race.⁸⁰ For other writers, of course, it always remained their birthplace whose loss involved the loss of their personal freedom, but it also symbolised the political tradition of the empire.⁸¹ For a few, like Michael Apostoles, the City was the homeland they claimed in territorial and political terms; for the majority, however, it retained only its cultural, that is religious significance.⁸²

⁷⁸ PP IV, 81: τοῦ δ’ ἡμετέρου τουτουὶ γένους καὶ τῆς κοινῆς ταύτης τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἑστίας ἀγαθῆ μοῖρα δικαίως τὴν βασιλείαν δεξαμένος, γενοῦ περὶ ἡμᾶς ... ὁ μέγας βασιλεὺς.

⁷⁹ Gounaridis, ‘Ἰωσήφ Βρυέννιος’, 140–1.

⁸⁰ Doukas, XI.5.

⁸¹ Phrantzes, *Chronikon*, 272–3.

⁸² Cf. the words of John Kananos (PG 156, cols. 76–7), describing the Constantinopolitans’ resistance in the siege of 1422: “let us risk our lives for the sake of ourselves and our wives and children, and for the freedom of our *patris* and *genos* and this great city, and most of all, for the true faith”.

The fact of the Fall certainly deprived the Byzantines of the possibility of referring to a geographically defined political power. It undoubtedly, and most clearly, deprived them of a point of reference in a homeland and birthplace. Reference to ‘us’ became confined to the cultural and mainly the religious sense. Thus the notion of *patris* gradually waned and it was now a question of *genos*, especially the *genos* of the Orthodox. In this case, I believe that what is most important is not, in itself, the loss of the dimension of *patris*. The significant fact is that the view which eventually prevailed was expressed with the vocabulary and the discourse of *genos* that had been cultivated before the Fall. I am of the opinion that what we observe in the following years is the continuation of the two currents that had developed before the Fall, and that what was at stake was the fortune of the partisans of each tendency in the face of the Turkish danger. I would hazard the suggestion that the struggle between the model of a secular state versus that of a theocratic empire, which began at the end of the 14th century, continued to exist even after 1453.

IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE: WHY THE CITY FELL

At the beginning, I defined as the basis of this study the need to situate the Byzantine 15th century in its historical context; that is, to sketch the profile of Byzantium not with the features that it no longer had, but with those that it acquired in the last century of its existence. I was not, however, concerned to narrate the political or military history of the period, highly eventful though it may be. Nor was it my intention to go into the diplomatic moves of the last Byzantine emperors, who sought by every possible means for allies and aid, as the very existence of the state was more and more threatened by the Turks. Finally, it was not my wish to construct a history of the ideas that circulated in the Byzantine world in a period that constituted the turning-point between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. I simply attempted to trace the bearers of political power in the 15th century and the means by which they handled it in particularly trying circumstances for the state that was Byzantium at that time.

My research turned in this direction above all because, in studying the later Palaiologan period, I had to take two self-evident considerations into account. First, Byzantium was a part of the unified Mediterranean economy, and, in consequence, could not be approached independently of the economic and social developments that were taking place in the West, and especially in Italy. Secondly, the Fall of Constantinople was a political as well as a military event, and consequently, in order to understand the dissolution of the Byzantine state in 1453, it was essential to examine the parameters that shaped political life in Constantinople in the last years before the Conquest.

In the 15th century, the capital of the once ecumenical empire was marked by the activity of merchants and entrepreneurs. Historical research in recent years has exposed their economic role as intermediaries between Byzantine and Italian trade, at the same time

pointing out the restrictions that the dominance of the Italians in the Eastern Mediterranean posed for the Byzantines. Constantinople was also still inhabited by the members of the old Byzantine aristocracy, which, because of the Turkish advance, had lost its lands and was obliged to invest its remaining wealth in commercial enterprises. My study of the names and titles of the dominant élite showed that the members of this group came, for the most part, from old aristocratic families, but had mingled with the commercial élite that conducted commercial activities and maintained relations with the Italian cities. This *mélange* of formerly distinct strata of Byzantine society was characterised by their mutual adaptation and, as was natural, determined their political behaviour. Although, on the whole, the research has more focused on the 'middle' class, it is nonetheless significant that the representatives of the old aristocracy were obliged to show their adaptability, not only in their economic orientation, but also in their political choices, in order to confront the reality created by the threat of the Turkish conquest.

In its obvious need to survive, the numerically limited group of *archontes*, with the last Palaiologoi at their head, adopted two political strategies: the distancing of the emperor from the Church, and the proclamation of a territorially defined and 'ethnically' homogeneous state. These strategies undermined the constitutive principles of Byzantium and brought the *archontes* into conflict with the Patriarchate. The conflict between the secular and the ecclesiastical *archontes* could, in the long-term perspective, have been the final expression of the medieval character of Byzantine society, were it not for the Fall. But for this very reason, it evolved into a greater struggle that marked the 15th century, because of the plan for the union of the Churches.

The Palaiologoi undoubtedly took their unyielding stance on the Union question with a view to securing aid from the West in order to repel the Turks. As it progressed, however, their position also developed into a political view on the relations between the State and the Church, with which the Palaiologoi were at odds. In reality their differences arose when the ecclesiastical authorities, who were steadily losing their traditional allies among the Byzantine ruling

élite and their traditional influence in a changing world, began to claim greater autonomy and not to recognise the reigning emperor's right to regulate church affairs. The rift, which continued to widen, allowed the last emperors to push forward their unionist policy without having to consider the pressures and the obstacles brought about by the patriarchal officials, and left room for them to formulate their objective more clearly: that is, the defence of their territorially defined secular power.

The empire of the last Palaiologoi, restricted to Constantinople and its surrounding region, was, geographically speaking, a city-state. Our survey of its various aspects has shown that Byzantium, in the fifty years before the Fall, was also tending to become a city-state in its political organisation. Its structure was significantly simplified and the bureaucratic machinery, which had been necessary for administering the empire in the past, disappeared. The *basileus* governed essentially by coordinating the two collective bodies that made decisions: the council, which assembled at his court and consisted of himself and his chief officials, and the *politeia*, a civic authority involving the wealthiest inhabitants of the City. The existence of the *politeia* is not immediately obvious from the sources. In other words, while the texts mention the *politeia* as a collective entity distinct from the *archontes* of the court, they say nothing at all about its composition. I have formulated the fundamental hypothesis that the members of this collectivity were the men referred to elsewhere as *politikoi archontes*, who, as I have observed, do not appear with any title or political function during the reign of John VIII Palaiologos. At the same time, I have noted, along with other students of the period, that individuals who are known to have had extensive commercial interests are also mentioned without official titles. These individuals drew political strength from the fact that, as tax farmers, they ensured the flow of revenue to the public treasury. I have thus suggested that they formed their own collective authority which had its basis in the political life of Constantinople. Consequently, with the exception of certain *archontes* from provincial merchant families who had been admitted into the imperial court, the rich merchants of Constantinople in all likelihood had their own governing body that maintained its

autonomy with respect to the emperor and allowed the 'people' to take part in critical decision making.

Although this evolution was hastened by the Turkish expansion, it was not the automatic result. The interest of the 15th century for the historian lies in the fact that, in view of the territorial contraction and the Turkish threat, the changes that were in gestation in Byzantine society from the previous century now found expression in the political field. In forging their policy, the Palaiologoi clothed in the ideology that was necessary to strengthen it in the face of their internal opponents and their likely allies in the West. With a political realism that was due in large measure to their education, they perceived that the survival of their power could be achieved in the framework of a Mediterranean world that was united not only in economic terms but also politically. In other words, if the political participation of the 'people' was a change that was already evolving from the 14th century, the last emperors accepted and strengthened it, both because of the undoubted strength that the 'middle class' had acquired, and because it gave them the advantage of negotiating on a more equal basis with the Italian cities to whom they turned. From what we have said it is apparent that both the Palaiologoi and the *archontes* who supported them looked to forms of political organisation that were more effective in the circumstances and were the result of and/or the precondition for a 'radicalization' of Byzantine political life. In the final analysis, the possibility that was outlined in the 15th century was precisely that of a 'new' type of rule, and more precisely the formation of an 'ethnically' defined and secularised authority. It is through this prism that we should see both the struggle between Unionists and Anti-Unionists and the cultivation of a 'hellenic' consciousness. Analysis of the surviving texts has confirmed what we already knew, that is, that on account of their Greek language, no 15th-century intellectual denied that he was a Hellene. However, the intellectuals approached their Hellenism in different ways, based on the fact that for the Palaiologoi and their supporters, Hellenism was an element of their political identity, or, conversely, it was something that they projected as the indispensable element for the formation of a distinct community with a definite territorial basis. From this point of view, it is not

coincidental that the opponents of the Palaiologoi, who congregated mainly around the officials of the Patriarchate, projected Orthodoxy as their unifying factor and spoke of the *genos* of the Orthodox. In the 'Orthodox utopia' of the Patriarchate, the reconstitution of the empire, in which the church would recover its shattered authority, was the only real political prospect, even after the Fall of the City.

It was exactly the model of the state championed by each of the rival social forces in 15th-century Constantinople that, in my view, was the issue at stake in the conflict between the Unionists and the Anti-Unionists. In this light, we can better understand the position of Gennadios Scholarios as patriarch against Plethon and his work. The political system that Plethon advocated was not based on the 'middle class', unlike the city-state of Constantinople, since its social basis was meant to be the agrarian population of the Peloponnese. However, his proposed state was 'ethically' homogeneous and secular. Thus, although his proposals were essentially concerned with the political organisation of a rural society, he himself was part of the spirit of the age that we have described at length in the foregoing pages. That is why Scholarios burned his work. Not because Plethon's idolatry was a threat to Orthodox doctrine, but because his political views, the views of a man in the entourage of the Palaiologoi, outlawed the idea of the empire and embraced the alternative version, in which the Patriarchate lost its politically preponderant role.

It would be difficult to maintain that the changes we have observed were the result of laborious planning or the object of theoretical deliberation. Besides, apart from Plethon, there was no systematic formulation of political theory and thought, which explains the lack of clarity in the lines of division that we have repeatedly discerned. The fragments of new political ideas that can be traced in the texts of the period were sporadic responses to the reality created by Turkish expansion and the economic unification of the Mediterranean area. The intellectuals, constrained by their position to defend the political decisions of the Palaiologoi, drew their arguments from the old arsenal of Byzantine political theory and from antiquity, guided by the corresponding ideas that were developing in the cities of Italy. At this point, clarification is

needed. Since the Italian cities in this period offered obvious parallels, with which Byzantium was in close contact, there was a constant, underlying comparison with the city-states, even when I did not make this explicit. The comparison was necessary in order to make sense of certain aspects of Byzantine society that would otherwise be difficult to understand. At no point, however, was there the suggestion that Byzantium changed because it was influenced by West on either the political or the cultural level. It is my conviction that the various influences that a society receives correspond to its specific needs and shape changes that it is undergoing internally. For the historian who identifies ‘influences’ of this kind, they are a clear indication that the society he is studying is undergoing transformation and is trying to adapt to the process. In the case of Byzantine society in 1453, what is remarkable is that, while it was changing, it had not fully processed the change. In terms of political theory, the exchange of ideas between East and West functioned as a foundation on which Byzantine intellectual society supported its helplessness.

Helplessness is, I think, the chief characteristic of the age and is clearly expressed in all manifestations of the collective subconscious. It is, in the end, this helplessness, indicative of a period of transition, which also gives modern scholars of the period the feeling that the evidence is slipping through their fingers.

I tried, as far as I was able, to put into some kind of order the data that I extracted from the available sources, and to connect them with the thread that I could see running through the political life of 15th-century Byzantium. I also tried to understand the contradictions that characterised that society, and especially the contradictions in the behaviour of its ruling class. Above all, I attempted to place within a coherent framework political practices and ideological expressions, which, in my estimation at least, could not be interpreted with the analytical tool of an extended Byzantine decline. In this, it was not always easy to categorise political groups in terms of consistently expressed opinions in all the political issues that arose in the 15th century. Deviations were to be expected and, at least as regards the question of Union, well known. Therefore, I did not particularly

dwell on them. So without resorting to simplistic formulae devoid of nuance, I emphasised mainly those points that made sense of the evident internal conflicts and explained the Fall as a political event.

In the end, it was the need to survive that radicalised the Byzantine élite: the *archontes* rejected the imperial past in practice, and tried to redefine their relations with the ecclesiastical authorities. However, such rifts as there were occurred with delays, contradictions, and certainly with reversals.

The famous saying, ‘Better the Turkish turban than the Latin mitre’, which is ascribed to Notaras, echoes a political stance that was taking shape as the Turks approached the walls of Constantinople and seals, I believe, the defeat of the ideas that predominated in the political life of 15th-century Byzantium. The ruling strata of Byzantine society, although they changed their economic behaviour, were unable or did not have time to change their political attitude. The Fall, as the end of a historical process, made the defeat definitive. By a curious, though not incomprehensible, trick of history, the Turkish presence, which hastened the ‘modernisation’ of the Byzantine state, brought its destruction at the same time. On the other hand, the unwillingness or inability of the West to come to the aid of beleaguered Constantinople caused some of the *archontes* to turn to the survival method they knew best: attachment to the power of the future.

However, and this is the final contradiction, these same *archontes* mounted the walls to fight the Turks and defend their country. As we wind up our excursion into the Byzantine 15th century, what we should keep in mind, because it is useful for understanding Byzantine society as well as our own ideological notions, is that the *archontes* were defending the homeland that they required, not the homeland that later generations created for them. Above all, we should remember that the image of 15th-century Byzantium as an empire in terminal decline was the construction after the event of those who emerged as the victors from the political conflict of the period: the members of the Patriarchate and those of its entourage who shared its views.

APPENDIX:

Prospography of politically active individuals at the courts of Manuel II (M), John VIII (I), and Constantine XI (K), with the dates of their deaths where known.

1. Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (PLP 10966)	M			1409
2. Manuel Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (PLP 10979)	M			
3. Andronikos Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (PLP 10957)	M	I	K	
4. Demetrios Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (PLP 10962)		I		c.1450
5. John Palaiologos Kantakouzenos (PLP 10974)			K	
6. Kantakouzenos <i>protostrator</i>			K	1453
7. Manuel Palaiologos (PLP 21512)			K	
8. Manuel Phakrases Kantakouzenos (PLP 29586)	M	I		
9. Demetrios Palaiologos Phakrases (PLP 29577)	M			
10. Phakrases Kantakouzenos (PLP 29581)		I		
11. Andronikos Palaiologos Iagaris (PLP 7808)			I K	
12. Mark Palaiologos Iagaris (PLP 7811)	M	I		c.1444
13. Manuel Palaiologos Iagaris (PLP 7810)		I	K	
14. Palaiologos Lachanas (PLP 21502)	M			
15. Demetrios Palaiologos Eirenikos (PLP 5979)	M			

16. Demetrios Skaranos (PLP 26035)	M			
17. Nicholas Dermokaites (PLP 5214)	M			
18. John Dermokaites (PLP 5211)	M	I	K	after 1453
19. George Palaiologos Dermokaites (PLP 5206)			K	
20. George Sphrantzes (PLP 27278)	M	I	K	
21. George Scholarios (PLP 27304)		I		after 1453
22. Nicholas Notaras (PLP 20733)	M			1426
23. John Notaras (PLP 20729)	M			1411
24. Loukas Notaras (PLP 20730)		I	K	1453
25. George Goudeles (PLP 4334)	M	I		
26. Nicholas Goudeles (PLP 4341)			K	
27. Demetrios Palaiologos Goudeles (PLP 4331?, 4335)	M			
28. Andronikos Tarchaneiotes Philanthropenos (PLP 29754)	M			1414
29. George Doukas Philanthropenos (PLP 29760)		I		c.1452
30. Manuel Philanthropenos (PLP 29769)	M			
31. Alexios Laskaris Philanthropenos (PLP 29753)			K	
32. Manuel Tarchaneiotes Boullotes (PLP 3088)	M	I		
33. Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites (PLP 17981)		I	K	1453
34. John Sophianos (PLP 26406)				
35. Nicholas Sophianos (PLP 26412)				
36. Demetrios Angelos Philommates Kleidas (PLP 29927)	M	I		
37. Paul Asan (PLP 1518)		I		c.1440

38. Constantine Asan (PLP 1503)	M			c.1415
39. Isaac Asan (PLP 1493)	M			1429
40. Manuel Laskaris Asan (PLP 1537)		I		
41. Andreas Laskaris Asan (PLP 1486)			K	
42. Matthew Palaiologos Asan (PLP 1508)	M	I		
43. Matthew Laskaris Palaiologos (PLP 14552)	M			
44. Libadarios	M			
45. Manuel Chrysoloras (PLP 31165)	M			1415
46. Demetrios Chrysoloras (PLP 31156)	M			1414
47. John Chrysoloras (PLP 31160)				
48. John Argyropoulos (PLP 1267)		I		
49. Phrangoulios Servopoulos (PLP 25183)		I	K	
50. Alexios Palaiologos Tzemplakon (PLP 27751)	M	I		
51. Manuel Agathon (PLP 88)				
52. John Bladynteros (PLP 2780)	M			
53. Andronikos Apokaukos Melissenos (PLP 17809)	M			
54. Nicholas Mamalis (PLP 16559)	M			
55. Theodore Karystenos (PLP 11297)			K	1453
56. Manuel Bryennios Leontares (PLP 14682)				
57. Andronikos Bryennios Leontares (PLP 14668)			K	
58. Demetrios Laskaris Leontares (PLP 14676)	M	I		1431?
59. John Laskaris Leontares (PLP 14679)				
60. Andreas Leontares			K	
61. Alexios Disypatos (PLP 5528)	M			
62. John Disypatos (PLP 5537)		I		

63. Manuel Disypatos (PLP 5540)		I	K	
64. George Disypatos (PLP 5529)		I		
65. Alexios Branas	M			
66. Hilarion Doria (PLP 29091)	M			
67. Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes (PLP 6223)	M			
68. Manuel Melanchrenos (PLP 17659)	M			
69. Manuel Koreses (PLP 13180?)				
70. Constantine Ralles Palaiologos	M	I		
71. Theodore Ralles Palaiologos	M			
72. Mamalis Lascaris (PLP 16558)		I	K	
73. Theologos Korax (PLP 13160)	M			c.1422
74. Sphrantzes Sebastopoulos (PLP 25085)				
75. Manuel Holobolos (PLP 1568)	M			
76. Manuel Adam (PLP 286)		I		
77. Alexios Antiochos (PLP 1038)	M			
78. Manuel Eskammatismenos (PLP 6145)		I		
79. John Laskaris Ryndakenos (PLP 14537)		I	K	after1453
80. Dermokaites (PLP 5203)				

Ambassadors

1. Mark Palaiologos Iagaris (1417)	M	I	
2. Manuel Chrysoloras (1414)	M		
3. Nicholas Eudaimonoioannis (1414)	M		
4. John Disypatos (1434)		I	
5. Demetrios Palaiologos Metochites (1434)		I	
6. Constantine Ralles Palaiologos	M	I	
7. Theodore Ralles	M	I	

8. Alexios Branas	M		
9. Hilarion Doria	M		
10. Theodore Palaiologos Kantakouzenos	M		
11. Demetrios Palaiologos			
12. Manuel Philantropenos	M		
13. Manuel Tarchaneiotes Boullotes		I	
14. Andronikos Palaiologos Iagaris		I	
15. Manuel Iagaris		I	K
16. Demetrios Angelos Philommates Kleidas	M	I	
17. Demetrios Palaiologos Methochites		I	
18. John Disypatos		I	
19. George Disypatos		I	
20. Manuel Disypatos		I	K
21. Alexios Disypatos	M		
22. Theodore Karystenos			K
23. Manuel Koreses		I	
24. Manuel Palaiologos		I	K
25. Palaiologos Lachanas	M	I	
26. Theologos Korax	M	I	
27. Demetrios Kantakouzenos			
28. Matthew Laskaris Palaiologos	M		
29. Loukas Notaras	M	I	
30. Manuel Kantakouzenos	M		
31. Demetrios Laskaris Leontaris	M		
32. Paul Asan		I	
33. Matthew Asan			K
34. Isaac Asan	M		
35. Laskaris Mamalis		I	

36. Andronikos Bryennios Leontaris			K
37. John Bladynteros	M		
38. Nicholas Mamalis	M		
39. George Sphrantzes		I	K
40. Alexios Laskaris Philantropenos			K
41. Andreas Leontaris			K
42. Manuel Melachrenos	M		
43. Libadarios	M		
44. Manuel Eskammatismenos		I	

Oikeioi (with dates attested as such)

1. Nicholas Sophianos 1399, 1409
2. Alexios Palaiologos Tzemplakon 1399, 1409
3. Michael Raoul 1400
4. Gabriel Palaiologos 1400
5. John Palaiologos 1400
6. Pierios Lampadenos 1400
7. Manuel Raoul Palaiologos 1400
8. Astras 1399
9. John Goudeles 1400
10. George Goudeles 1409, 1423
11. Andreas Argyropoulos 1400
12. Theodore Mamalis 1400
13. George Mamalis
14. Andreas Doukas Mamalis
15. John Sophianos
16. Manuel Bouzenos

17. Nicholas Makrodoukas
18. Demetrios Palaiologos Phakrases 1406
19. Demetrios Boullotes 1400
20. Manuel Kantakouzenos Phakrases 1409
21. Andreas Kantakouzenos Philantropenos 1409
22. Demetrios Leontaris 1409, 1418, 1423, 1431
23. Manuel Bryennios Leontaris 1409
24. Demetrios Chysoloras
25. Andronikos Apokaukos Melissenos 1406
26. Manuel Agathon 1409
27. Demetrios Palaiologos Eirenikos
28. Matthew Laskaris Palaiologos
29. Nicholas Dermokaites 1406
30. Nicholas Notaras 1418

Members of the Senate present in the synod of 1409

1. Theodore Kantakouzenos
2. Constantine Asan
3. Nicholas Notaras
4. Alexios Kaballarios Tzemplakon
5. Manuel Phakrases Kantakouzenos
6. Nicholas Sophianos
7. George Goudeles
8. Andronikos Tarchaneiotes Philanthropenos
9. Demetrios Leontares
10. Demetrios Chysoloras
11. Andronikos Apokaukos Melissenos

12. Demetrios Palaiologos Eirenikos
13. Sphratzes Sebastopoulos
14. Matthew Laskaris Palaiologos
15. N. Megas primmekirios
16. Kantakouzenos
17. Manuel Bryennios Leontares
18. Manuel Agathon
19. Andreas Asan
20. Demetrios Palaiologos Goudeles

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